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A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX



*By the same Author*  
ON FOOT IN SUSSEX





THE ESTUARY OF THE CUCKMERE

# A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

*by*

A. A. EVANS

*Vicar of East Dean and Friston, 1908-1929*

WITH 23 ILLUSTRATIONS



METHUEN & CO. LTD., LONDON  
*36 Essex Street, W.C.2*

*First Published in 1935*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

## PREFACE

Two years ago I put out a book, *On Foot in Sussex*, which had a generous reception. I find there is a large public who like to read about wooded lanes and the creatures which belong to them, about old churches and the secret things they will tell to those who linger over them and study the touches of time. Not only Sussex but every county in our land is full of good things for those who are not in a hurry and go about with humble minds. But the family of Shut-eyes is a large one.

There are some whose good opinion I value who may upbraid me for writing about places much of whose charm is that they are hidden from common gaze. They think of the traffic of the Brighton road on Sunday and fear that this will spill over to byways as yet quiet and remote. I do not share these fears. The vast majority of motorists are not of leisurely mind and do not care for roads which go nowhere in particular. It is only a few who will sit for an hour on a stile and find great happiness in learning the notes of an unusual warbler, or remain very still in the sandy hollow of a lane to watch the jerky movements of a lizard on the opposite side, or talk with a rural worker on the high subject of the wool-clip and the price it may fetch at the next Lewes sale. Yet I know in the

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heart of every healthy man and woman is a love of the open air and the country-side. At the beginnings of time all were country dwellers, and a longing for it is latent in human nature.

So I am sending out another book about a delectable county of which I dare to say that though much written about and much talked about is yet, off the main tracks and away from certain show-places, but little known.

I wish to thank an old friend, Arthur Beckett, editor of the *Sussex County Magazine* and the *Sussex County Herald*, for permission to use material which has already appeared in those periodicals; also the Lord Bishop of Chichester for permission to reprint two articles from the *Chichester Diocesan Gazette*, of which he is editor. Not least I express my indebtedness to John E. Ray, of Hastings, the companion of many a long, happy tramp, whose wide knowledge of the past history of the county is known to all its students; nor should I miss out L. F. Salzman, whose books on medieval England are a mine of valuable information.

A. A. EVANS

CHICHESTER

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## CHAPTER I

### FLOWERS OF AN OLD WALL

AN old wall, whether it be of weathered stone or mellowed brick, is a thing of interest to those who have eyes to see. It nearly always has a story to tell, and, moreover, age bestows a beauty which is wanting in buildings new and raw. Near my home are row on row of new houses, each like the other in dreary uniformity; but intervening, and giving refreshment to the eye, is a delightful stretch of old wall. It is of centuries ago, built of Pulborough stone, of which a peculiarity is the horizontal lines in its texture of brown, orange, yellow and grey. Rooted in the interstices are little frail beauties which love mortar—ivy-leaved toadflax, pearlwort, bits of wartcress, and, flaunting itself at the top, golden ragwort.

I have a friend who is wise in plant lore and knows of the partiality of certain flowers for certain places. Some time ago he took over a new house, which has on the garden side an old wall. To me the loveliest part of a lovely garden is this wall, which now belongs to him. It is at its full glory at springtime and early summer. March and April show bunches of white arabis, purple aubretia and a drooping linaria; later comes an unfolding of cerastium, in shining

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masses of white; there are single wallflowers and snapdragon, and at the foot are flowers which love stone and moisture, saxifrages and myosotis.

I wonder how many of my readers know Tortington Church? It is, let me say, among the minor architectural jewels of Sussex. The churchyard is just one acre, and that has sufficed during a thousand years for the needs of out-spent humanity, those of the parish; though, now that Arundel is spilling over in that direction, it is doubtful if the acre will serve much longer. On one side of the churchyard is an old wall, which separates it from the manor farm, and made up, if my memory serves me right, of flint brick and rubble stone. This, when I first saw it, more than thirty years ago, was the home of a multitude of wall-loving flowers. I will give a list of some of these, but the enumeration is in the past tense. I believe ivy has been allowed to grow freely on my old wall, and most of these fair things are now no more. The plants, however, were not rare; they were only such as you might find here and there in any part of the land, so there is no need to go to Tortington and bewail the ravages of unchecked ivy.

There were three plants, very small and inconspicuous, and some people there are who would call them unattractive. Vernal whitlow grass, *Draba verna*, is one. It grew in abundance. Its full stature when flowering is from two to three inches, so it has to be looked for. The leaves are in a

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circlet; a half-crown piece would cover them; a single leafless stalk rises from its centre and you will see that each petal of the tiny crown of flowers is deeply cleft. That is a feature which distinguishes it from some relations and gives it individuality.

Of the same family, and much of the same appearance, though a trifle bigger, was the rock cress, *Arabis thaliana*. Its claim to name and place as a species is the stem leaves, petals uncloven and long seed pods. The third of the miniature group was the pearlwort, *Sagina procumbens*. This is not a gardener's delight; it is an insistent weed, invading paths, wedging itself between stones, and refusing, like cheeky street urchins, to be easily moved off. Each part of the pearlwort, tiny leaf and tiny flower, is of grace and beauty. If only, instead of being microscopical in its fashioning, the inches were feet, it might take proud place among the fair things of the garden. Each of these three flowers belongs, as also do shepherd's purse, groundsell and the chickweeds, to what botanists term self-fertilizers; that is to say, the flowers are too small, the nectar too spare, to receive visits from insects. For continuance they fight for themselves, and are, if I may put it so, at the bottom of the social ladder in the flower world.

Very different in the estimation of the common gazer are some other denizens of my wall. There is the yellow corydalis, *Lutea*, a gay thing of golden blossoms among leaves of a delicate pale green.

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These leaves are as deeply cut as maidenhair fern. It is a flower not born to blush unseen, but beckons to every passer-by. Cottage folk love it, and in many trim village gardens it has an honoured place. In my parish of East Dean every morning when going to the village school I was greeted through half the year with the cheerful smile of yellow corydalis. It has been there among stones beneath the window-sill of the teacher's house for years beyond reckoning, and it is there still.

Now, of plants one may say there are those which love the shade like heartsease, high winds like dropwort, the hot sun like cistus, the patter of much rain like gipsywort, long droughts like the house-leek, and the kiss of sea spray like thrift. Plants, too, have social groupings. There are proud beauties, such as roses and lilies who had their beginnings in the wild like other plants but are cosseted and cared for by the gardener; and there are plants of low degree, like shepherd's purse and common dock whose dwelling is waste corners and abandoned heaps.

On my old wall I have mentioned among several others the especially gay and attractive yellow corydalis. It dwells as often in trim gardens as on neglected walls, and with equal grace. Another joyous plant of the wall is the ivy-leaved toadflax. It has the scientific name, a bit of rhythmic Latin, of *Linaria cymbalaria*. I am inclined to say it has a partiality for the walls of church and churchyard, I so often find it there.

## FLOWERS OF AN OLD WALL

Perhaps it is that a church and its accessories has in its first rearing mortar well limed and strong and so rarely need the raking and worrying of the trowel, a thing no stone-loving plant can long abide. I have heard that the little trailing toad-flax was at the first brought to this country by monks who loved to stock the physick garden, an adjunct of every such settlement, and obtained herbs of healing from all parts of Europe and the East. Like many other of our British flowers it came here as an immigrant, and we may count it among the beloved aliens. The juice has a healing virtue, it was said, but what that is I do not know. Also I should add there are dark associations in the history of this innocent flower. It yields when distilled an arsenical oxide which was used by those who followed the refined art of slow poisoning and secret murder, and may be said to have a place in the story of the Borgia and Medici and rascaldom of many ages.

There also grew here the wall rue or maiden-hair spleenwort. It is said to be the smallest fern in Britain and may be 'the hyssop which groweth out of the wall' of which Solomon spake. It is fairly frequent and rarely exceeds four inches.

Pellitory-of-the-wall is ubiquitous—it is on my wall, on your wall, on every wall sufficiently aged and dilapidated. The plant cannot be called beautiful. Its leaves are hairy, they collect the dust, the flowers red, small, dingy, but for all that pellitory is a plant of renown among those who use herbs to meet the ills that flesh is heir to. It



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possesses, I am told, ingredients of potency, and as a simple is soothing and cooling. I have heard of its virtues; though my information is second-hand. A friend of mine had gout in a tendon of the heel, which besides maiming him gave torture as of red-hot irons. During some months the efforts of his doctor were vain; he felt inclined to say, in the words of a Hebrew king, 'I shall go softly all my days.' But healing came. Meeting a country woman he was told a cure was awaiting him in the abundant pellitory which bestrewed the garden walls of his home. He tried it, and though the story sounds a bit marvellous I was assured that after months of misery in three days he felt relieved, and in a fortnight was cured. All hail to pellitory-of-the-wall! Dingy, unbeautiful, common, yet for those in need worth its weight in gold.

Now I would mention two more plants on this old wall; small, of humble mien and yet choice. They are the rue-leaved saxifrage, *Saxifraga tri-dactylites*, and thyme-leaved sandwort, *Arenaria serpyllifolia*. The first has a minute and snowy-white flower and leaves of rich green. It is not common and also not rare. The other, too, is dainty, loves dry places and the hot sun. Both of these some years ago grew in abundance on the west wall of Arundel Church, but they have been cast out recently by the mason's trowel.

There are plants rare and of beauty to be found on old walls, but these must be sought for, and no

## FLOWERS OF AN OLD WALL

botanist who loves to go in quest cares to give broadcast their names. There is joy in making discovery not unlike that of the gold-digger, but the true flower-lover sees, notes and leaves them to live out their lives. I may allude, however, without rashness, to a charming ragwort, mis-named *Senecio squalidus*, which shows itself on almost every wall of Chichester. It is also much in evidence on the college walls of Oxford. Whoever bestowed on it that name did so on a rule of contraries.

I have read somewhere that this unusual ragwort came to Chichester with an Oxford don when appointed to a place of dignity in the cathedral in the early years of the nineteenth century. He could not bring his beloved college with him, so he brought this fair thing as a reminder.

Here and there on walls the small flowered crowfoot, *R. parviflorus*, may be found, and I know of a cottage in the depths of West Sussex where, on its garden wall, is that dingy rarity, *Draba muralis*. On a ruin much frequented by visitors is a noble little plant. I dare not mention its name. It was seen there and recorded more than 200 years ago by William Sherard in one of his several visits through Sussex in search of 'simples'. It is still there, seen but not noticed, by thousands of holiday-makers every year.

It is the happy memory of a wall between a churchyard and a farmyard which has inspired what I have written, but generations of flowers

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pass more swiftly than those of human life. Thirty years have changed the inhabitants of the wall, and the visitor will find but few of those I have mentioned, but that matters little. They are typical of what comes and goes on every old wall if left to itself. Since writing the above, after years of absence I visited on a May morning the old spot, and the only things unchanged were the church, the long thatched barn, and farm-sheds whose tiled roof had a filigree of old gold. These were the same, and perhaps if we could tread back in time 500 or 700 years it would look much the same, a Norman church and a farm-stead drowsing in the pleasant sunlight of early summer.

This day in my walk I went on to Ford. It is only a mile away, and the fabric is even older in its beginnings and history than Tortington. The church stands at a ford of the Arun which long years ago has passed out of use, and by a road which has also vanished from memory though its lines can still be made out here and there. This road was probably the earliest of the coastal roads of Sussex, cambered in parts and straightened by Roman engineers, and apparently coming from Worthing and passing on to Regnum. How this land is marked with the footmarks of its travellers! If my readers want to read the story of this isolated church and of the lost highway they will find it abundantly told by Philip Mainwaring Johnston in the forty-third volume of the *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, and in a book of Hadrian Allcroft, the

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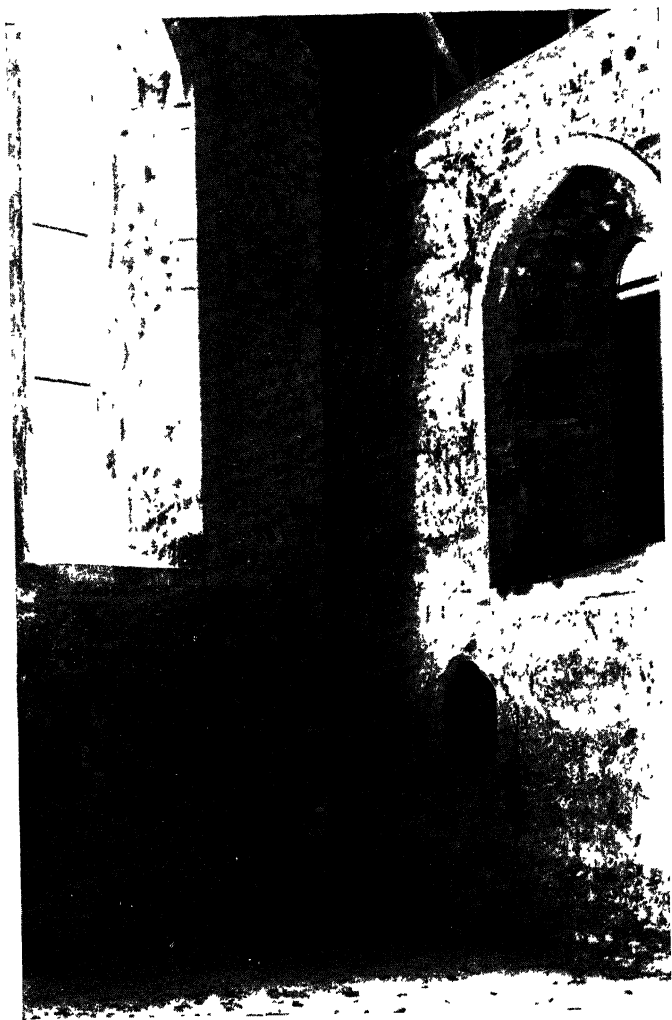
last he wrote, *The Waters of the Arun*. Ford has a churchyard wall bulging, irregular, enclosing an acre of burying ground, and there can be seen many of the flowers described as on those of Tortington.

## CHAPTER II

### PAGHAM EPISCOPI

PAGHAM is one of the earliest 'hams' of the South Saxon settlement. It dwells within the sweep of bay east of Selsey. On this side is a wide inlet of the sea called, for a reason I do not know, a 'harbour'. No vessel of any size could enter it or ever get out of it. It is near and yet well apart from the bustle of Bognor, a town of yesterday. There is more than one Pagham in the popular mind. There is an area of villadom which has settled on and devoured up fair fields and coppices, a 'Builder's Delight', and Aldwick, which has grown on to Bognor, and whose etymology means 'Old Wick', should now be called Newick. Pagham beach is another outgrowth. The 'beach' is not a place, as the name might suggest, of lonely shingle and sand, where the Nature-lover can look for coast-haunting birds and brine-loving plants. It is a crowded wilderness, a gathering place of wooden shacks, homes of corrugated iron and decayed railway carriages. It is the latest horror which has befallen the Sussex coast. I advise those who love peace, beauty and Nature never to visit Pagham beach.

But Pagham itself, the 'ham' of old time, where the church stands and some lovely cottages



A DESOLATE CHAPEL  
BARTON'S MANOR, NYETIMBER



## PAGHAM EPISCOPI

gather, where, also, the road ends, this is still a spot secluded and unspoilt. May heaven, and landowners mindful of their souls' health, avert the incursion of rows of villas, so wearisome, in blatant white roughcast and tiles machine-made, which refuse to weather.

Pagham is old, its roots go deep into English history. What does the name stand for? Is it Pecca's ham, some Saxon thane and his home? or is it the Padda whom the Venerable Bede mentions as one of the eager followers of Wilfrid from Northumbria, and who won here the first converts to the faith and built a 'minster'? I do not know. There are some cottages close by the church which you, my reader, if you had strolled by 150 or 200 years ago, supposing such a thing as travelling backward in time, would appear in their fronts of wooden porch, climbing honeysuckle and jessamine just as they are now, with church bells tolling out the hours, cocks crowing, hens clucking, children with satchel off to school and man going forth to his work and to his labour until the evening. There is little if any change in life and home of the country labouring man. It was on a cheerful summer morning I was last at Pagham, and the cottages were an interesting study. They are stone built, though I wonder where the stone came from. There are no quarries near, but there were, I believe, formerly large numbers of 'sarsens' lying about. The stone of the cottages is brown, hard, and of ferrous appearance. Or are they, and much of the walling about



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the village, from stones which once belonged to the noble manor house of the Archbishops of Canterbury? This stood close to the south-eastern corner of the church, though now only a field deeply seamed shows its position. The cottages are thatched, they have gardens; also, edging the road, all unfenced, are cheerful lines of old-fashioned flowers. At the one opposite the church I noticed Dame's-violet, alliums, forget-me-nots, common saxifrages and gilly-flowers, all traditional plants beloved of cottagers.

It may seem strange that this village and church, so remote from Canterbury, should belong to that see, and should be one of its oldest endowments, though now, in these latter days, the tie is broken. It came about in a curious way, and because of one of Wilfrid's quarrels. Wilfrid was undoubtedly a saint, but a troublesome one; he was the sweetest and kindest of men where the poor and labouring and suffering were concerned, and he was ready, for the slightest reason, or no reason at all, to quarrel with the high and mighty. But all saints are but sinners touched up and with an upward look. They are not angels on earth. He fell out with Archbishop Theodore, a foreigner, but one of the best men who ever reached English soil, and one of the greatest of the many great archbishops of Canterbury. I do not know what the quarrel was about—both were rather masterful men—but Wilfrid had his times of sharp compunction, and in one of these, as a friendly gesture and a sign he was ready to bury

## PAGHAM EPISCOPI

the hatchet, he gave to Theodore the manor of Pagham, which included also the quarter of Chichester known as the Pallant. Pagham manor had been one of the many gifts made to the see of Selsey by Cadwalla, and I do not know that Wilfrid had any right to give it away, but the saint was not one who took a modest view of his rights and authority. The possession of Pagham-cum-the-Pallant was a valued one of the archbishops. The land is rich loam, they kept stewards of the manor, several officials, held court, and later Thomas à Becket built a noble residence, of which all that is now visible are lines of moat and a handsome stone barn, still called, I believe, Becket's barn. The church also belongs to the period of his stormy reign, being a graceful edifice of late Norman and early Gothic.

The story of Pagham Harbour is a chequered one. From the earliest times of which we have knowledge it was an inlet of the sea, but for ages two forces have been at work to hinder the in-going and out-going of the waters. One is the 'Eastward drift' ever piling up—as it has at Chesil beach, and as it has at Shoreham Harbour—a line of shingle, making the inlet narrower and the daily scour more intense. The other force at work has been the longing of labouring men to win the wide, muddy flats and make them, as they can become, the richest and sweetest of all herbage. As you look to-day at the green-fringed harbour of Pagham when filled with the returning tide, you see a story of age-long and costly effort

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broken, frustrated, and thrown back. So far the sea has won.

The inning of the harbour began early in the Middle Ages, and more was made at the end of the seventeenth century, but it was in the nineteenth century that a struggle began at vast cost to wrest the flats for pasturage and meadow. In 1805 a sea-wall of more than 1,500 feet was built to hold back the tide; another reclamation was carried out in 1852, chiefly to serve the tide-mill at Sidlesham, and a third and last in 1876. For thirty-four years this hollow land was among the best of the county for the fattening and finishing of cattle for the market, though it is doubtful whether the income it brought was ever adequate to the great expenditure of capital. Then in an hour, in one fateful night, the toil of all those years was undone. In the early hours of 16th December 1910, when, following an abnormal rainfall and when springtide and south-west winds worked together, the sea-wall was broken through, the sluice-gates shattered, and Mr. Claude Bishop, the then owner, looked out in the morning, and where had been his salt-meadows of 4,500 acres, saw a wide expanse of water shimmering in the winter sunlight. The sea had won.

All lovers of Sussex birds know the book, *Knox's Ornithological Rambles*. He wrote about the middle of the last century and makes frequent mention of strange fowl which came to these inland waters. He describes flights of wild swan



TORTINGTON CHURCH



## PAGHAM EPISCOPI

which settled here, heard the boom of bitterns and caught glimpses of the osprey fishing in the harbour. The osprey still occasionally revisits the spot, but now that beach tenements have spread and week-enders are much abroad he will never dwell among us again.

Pagham Harbour is a name quite modern. Of old it was known as Underyng, sometimes Widdering, and later, Selsey Harbour. Two streams run into it, the Bramber Rife and the Pagham Rife. On a bright day of May, as I rested by the Bramber Rife and ate a midday luncheon of bread and cheese, I watched a pair of kingfishers circling around me for nearly an hour, quite indifferent to my presence. But then if you remain quite still it is wonderful on what close terms you can get with wild Nature. I think the kingfishers were giving themselves a holiday hour after a morning's labour of feeding their nestlings.

I have in my botanical note-book the record of a holiday I took around the harbour and along Pagham beach—oh, ever so long ago. It was the 1st of August 1899, and since then mighty things have happened and I am, as I know, older. It was then lonely beachland. From the sluice-gates to Church Farm turning there was no sort of erection, and it looked a silent, untrodden land. I visited the spot again in August of this year and found a great change. A vast number of cheap buildings had arisen and the long beach had the look of a diffused mining camp. What astonishing

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names some people give to their bungalows! Many of these seem to be born of fevered dreams.

I will tell my readers first of the rarities I failed to find of those I had discovered and rejoiced over on my first visit. There was *Bartsia viscosa*; for this I searched all about where the water gates had once stood, but in vain. It was the only settled habitat of this plant in the county, and has now apparently gone to the land of Lost Things. Also blue fleabane, sea-holly and hare's-foot trefoil; but these are flowers of assertive beauty which leads to their undoing. Shall I give you a list of plants of charm and interest which I did find? No, I will not, for there are those abroad whose eyes are only for destruction and I may be conniving at the extirpation of fair things. Yet I do believe that the worst foes of rare plants are not eager children and thoughtless trippers, for it is only showy flowers which appeal to them. It requires not only open eyes but informed minds to find the jewels of Flora's kingdom. There are still jewels left in areas of dreary shingle, but they can never be seen by the multitude. Some of the worst spoilers are budding botanists and greedy collectors.

On my return I met a proud parishioner of Pagham who had a grievance against Bognor. He accused the people of that important watering-place of suffering from swollenheadedness. 'Why', he asked me, 'do they write their place down, a blown-out fishing hamlet it is, as Bognor Regis?'

## PAGHAM EPISCOPI

In my ignorance I ventured to say that good King George after his illness had dwelt and grown strong there, to the joy of the people of Bognor.

‘Not at all,’ he said. ‘The house of his sojourn is not in Bognor, but within the ancient boundaries of Pagham, and by all that is right Bognor has no more claim to the title of Regis than Little Peddlington. That belongs to this parish. This parish ought to be Pagham Regis.’ So I gathered knowledge as I made the turning of Church Farm.

The story of Pagham spans all the ages of English history and, indeed, before that, for there are sarsens about in lanes and utilized in buildings which were dropped and scattered when a sheet of ice covered the land. I wonder whether any parish in England has so many domestic chapels, or traces of them, as this one? There is a walling left, with picturesque tool-work, of a chapel of St. Andrew at the end of the lane which runs up to the harbour bank; there is a stable near a house called now ‘Woodbine’ which shows signs of ecclesiastical origin; beyond, at Bowley Farm, are chapel remains with, at the altar end, a piscina. Just over the parish border there are also traces of chapels at Lidsey, Shripney, Elsham, Bilsham, Flansham and South Mundham. Recently Lord Moyne has restored to its ancient beauty the grange chapel of Baillifs Court.

Why so many vestiges of ancient piety? Is the reason that Wilfrid and his followers, who made



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this region the centre for their missionary journeys and a gathering place from time to time for mutual refreshment, imparted for ages after a memory and an influence?

That afternoon I found another ancient manor chapel, spacious, of much beauty and but little known, which I will presently describe. The chapel is linked with a question which perhaps many of my readers who love what is old and comely may have asked. Which of the hundreds of old houses in Sussex, still inhabited, is the oldest? I can think of only three under this head. In a dip of the Downs between Excett and Litlington is Charleston. It was, as the name implies, a carl's tun, but there is no sign to-day of its Saxon beginning except the silted-up creek at its edge and its hidden position. The present house, still in full use, has windows, graceful nookshafts, stiff-foliaged capitals and other features of the Transitional-Norman style, and which tells you it was built about 1200. Close to it and to the south is West Dean rectory house, of age about 1280, and possibly the oldest inhabited parsonage house in England. The third, and apparently much the oldest, is this of Barton in the parish of Pagham, which has walling, gabling and other features which indicate a dwelling-house, or 'aula', of some years before the Norman Conquest. You can read a detailed description of this 'home of a thane' in the forty-sixth volume of the *Sussex Archæological Collections*, written by Philip Mainwaring Johnston.

## PAGHAM EPISCOPI

Nyetimber is a hamlet about a mile east of Pagham Church. There is an inn, radiant in whitewash, a smithy, bakery and cluster of cottages, some of which are thatched. Close by the smithy is a farm gate and farm path which lead up to Barton manor house with its delusive modern frontage. Around it, and including the home field, are traces of the moat. In a portion of the building used until recently as a brew-house is 'the aula of an early Saxon thane'. I use the words of the architect who carried out a restoration about 1902. The north, south and east walls are fairly complete and there is part of the west wall. Outside, on the north, you see a lofty gabled end of the hall built of water-worn stones from the beach, and with many herring-bone courses. Inside, behind some shuttered panels, you get a close view of the masonry, and there is the head of a door, apparently of the same age as the walls. It is a dull mind which is not stirred by seeing handiwork which carries one back to an England before parliaments, before statute law, before towns, except a few of Roman foundation, and to a time when people lived in a land of almost unbroken country.

The chapel, which I have already alluded to, is by its side and is of much later date. It is pure Early English Gothic, of about 1220. Though the west end has been destroyed it is of large proportions and with many touches of interest. The illustration shows a corner of this dear, desolate building. You see a lancet window, one of three;

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it is in the east wall and over where the altar stood. There is also shown a trefoiled headed piscina. The shallow saucer dish is intact. A few feet above it is a clean-cut hole an inch wide which Mr. Johnston thinks held the rod which sustained the Lenten veil. Outside, on the north, are massive buttresses with set-offs. The stone is probably that of the Bognor or Mixen rock and is used with Caen, while the heads of the windows are turned with chalk.

The house is tenantless. It is like a creature troubled, for it is on the edge of building developments and changes are at hand. It awaits the eye of a pitying millionaire to bring it back to use and comeliness.

Is there any district in all Sussex with so many links with a wonderful past as this of Pagham?

### CHAPTER III

#### A FAIR RIVER OF SUSSEX

THE early highways of Sussex were riverways. Except for the Stane Street and a few rough trackways such as those on the high Downs, and the often bogged ones of the Weald, no roads existed. The oldest settlements of the county are at the estuaries of its rivers and as far up the waterways as shallow vessels could reach. Regnum stood from the beginning at a crossing of ways, but was close—as its successor, Chichester, is now—to an inlet of the sea.

Of the river-roads of Sussex the Cuckmere was the one of least importance. No castle asserted itself or tidal port marked its course. Alfriston and Hellingly are only villages and never have been more. Nor has the Cuckmere any bridge famous for age and beauty like that of Trotton which spans the Western Rother—one of the noblest bridges of the Middle Ages south of the Thames—or Stopham, which, though much later in date, has both strength and charm. Excett bridge is a modern work of iron girders and stays, and as ugly as it could be made. Longbridge has only the antiquity of its name.

Here I would say that the Cuckmere has always been a stream of special interest to me, partly

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because it has a picturesque outlet as yet unspoiled by mean buildings or any buildings at all. It is of all Sussex rivers where they meet the sea the loneliest, and therefore the haunt of interesting birds and flowers. But the chief reason for my partiality is that I happen to have lived near it through many years of life and it is the one with which I am most familiar.

When first I came to my Downland village I was greatly interested in the parish registers which both at East Dean and Friston cover some 400 years. I conned them, transcribed them, and imbibed, in the course, a great deal of local history. I would commend to all country parsons the value of making a full transcription. One delightful feature of ancient registers is that they are rarely concerned only with the recital of births, deaths and marriages. There are glosses in them of other matters, interpolations, and if the parson of other days is garrulous, we get side lights of national changes as seen from the parish angle, and, not rarely, bits of village scandal which at all times has been the very salt of village life.

In my old East Dean register there is the entry which I here reproduce:

*in the year 1656 first bridge  
was built with stone*

A tracing about Excett Bridge from the East Dean Register book.

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‘In the yeare 1656 Exset brege was bilt with stone.’ Although the parish was a few miles from the crossing, the vicar considered it so important a piece of news that he entered it in the registers. Evidently there had been a wooden bridge, perhaps a succession of bridges; but timber is a frail means of crossing a tidal river, especially when it has to bear the load of a Sussex wagon and the measured tread of a team of oxen.

The bridge which is here chronicled has long perished. The Rev. W. Budgen, in a highly informing article in the *Transactions of the Eastbourne Natural History, Photographic and Literary Society* of April 1919, considers there have been at least four bridges constructed at this spot within the last 300 years. His contribution, I may say, is packed with details of the story of this river since Domesday, its bridges and watermills. From the thirteenth century, and possibly before, there have been bridges along the course of the Cuckmere. This at Excett comes perhaps last in date, for it is near the outlet where the ‘mere’ is wide and the stream sinuous. The road from Bourne to Seaford and Meeching, although ancient, was not important. The old road—as old as human history—is that which passes over, or just under, Wind-over hill, and made a crossing by ford a little above the present bridge and climbed the westward Downs by Winton Street.

Let us visit some of the settlements along its wavering course. At the mouth is Excett, a name which vexes etymologists. It is probably one of

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the very few hybrids among place-names of the county, linked with two different races and two different ages. Bell-Tout, a headland east of Birling Gap, is another instance of this. There is little doubt that the terminal 'set' is the same word as 'site' and 'seat', which we find in the names of Dorset and Somerset; there is more doubt, but a likelihood, that 'Ex' is the Celtic name of the river, as Exe and Exeter, in Devonshire. So we have in Excett 'the dwellers by the Exe'. In quite recent years a few people see Latin in this word and spell it Ex-eat, and this without grounds of grammar or history. Except for two cottages and a farmhouse, 'the dwellers by the Exe' have departed. You can find on the lip of Haven Brow the foundation lines of a parish church—nave, apse, chancel and porch—which passed into ruin in the fourteenth century. The scourge of the Black Death fell in this district with terrible severity, and it may be because of this the church was left forsaken and desolate.

Chyngton, on the other side, is a name of Saxon flavour; so, also, West Dean, to which the derelict parish of Excett is now joined. 'dean' means a long valley, in distinction to a 'coombe', which is, or usually is, a saucer-like hollow, such as Telscombe. There are two West Deans in Sussex, and if a likely reading of Assher, the chronicler, be taken, it was this which provided home and occasional shelter for the anxious, wandering, scholar-king, Alfred, 'a king', says his loving chaplain, 'pierced with the nails of

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many sorrows.' The village of this 'dean', it will be noticed, stands away and out of sight of both river-highway and sea. The weed-grown pond, close to a ruined manor house, is what is left of an ancient creek connecting it with the Cuckmere.

Another creek, now become a muddy pool, will be found a mile up the river beyond West Dean. It is that of Charleston, 'carl's tun'. In the dwelling-house at the head of the pool can be seen what is, in this writer's opinion, the oldest, finest and best-preserved bit of early domestic architecture in Sussex. There is another survival still older at Nye-timber, near Pagham which may be pre-Norman, but it is only a fragment of walling, almost hidden by later work. Charleston dates from about 1200. It was the home of another Alfred, lesser in stature than Alfred the King, commonly known as Alvred Pincerna, cupbearer, as the name indicates, to the Conqueror, though the title was, I think, at that time only ornamental. He settled here and took over wide lands as a gift from his master, but the building, the oldest portion, is later than his time. There are graceful lights and windows, having banded shafts with stiff foliage in the capitals of the period called Transitional Norman; there are walling, set-offs and buttresses. It is a home of late Norman period of real charm, and has been carefully restored by Walter Godfrey, an architect, who loves the fair things of far-off days. A dovecot is close by; this was an invariable adjunct to a medieval manor house, as it



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was a source, one at least, of fresh food at a time when, in the winter, flesh food was mostly salted. This dovecot has a ladder rotating from the central support, so as to give access to the tiers of pigeon-holes.

Beyond the house, among the farm buildings, is an ancient thatched barn; inside is some interesting timbering: there are tie beams, queen posts, and, on each side, like the long aisles of a church, oaken pillars. Each interval between them formed a bay or stall for a pair of oxen. I remember on my first visit to this old barn, when a labourer threw open the great doors of the threshing floor, the play of sunlight and deep shadow gave to the interior some of the mystery and beauty of a great church.

Until a hundred years ago, or less than that, all the draught work on Downland farms was done by oxen—Sussex reds or Welsh blacks. I often saw what was indeed the last team of draught cattle in Sussex—black Welsh they were—working on the lands of this district, slow in movement, but unpausing, calm and, one might say, solemn in their mien. To the poet Yeats such a scene pictured in *Countess Cathleen* the slow years and the harrow on the soul of one who greatly sorrowed.

Tell them that walk the floor of peace  
That I would die and go to her I love;  
The years like great black oxen tread the world,  
And God the herdsman goads them on behind  
And I am broken by their passing feet.

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About a mile beyond Charleston is Litlington, a village of one straggling street. Many of the cottages are pleasant to the eye, flint-walled, thatched, and set in trim gardens, but some recent ones are of red brick, a material foreign in such a village, and obtrusive. The church is small, but of much interest. Its date is about 1200 or perhaps a little earlier. You can see two Norman windows on the north and south wall of the chancel. Here, too, is a recessed tomb which served as an Easter sepulchre in pre-Reformation years, and opposite a piscina and sedilia, all of charming tool-work. On the chancel arch is still left a projecting corbel which served to support the rood beam and a tympanum.

The hand of the 'restorer' has fallen heavily. I have seen a drawing of the interior of Litlington Church of 1805, and some things of rare beauty shown in it are now swept away, among them a chancel screen having tracery in its open panel woodwork of early fourteenth century, a tympanum *in situ* above it, and a lovely oaken pulpit with tester.

The roof timbering is fifteenth century in date and is richly worked, especially the wall plates, which are embattled and with vacant shields. Now here is a list of features possessing interest and beauty which should attract the Rambler and inform his mind. Outside the porch is a rose tree which, so I have found on my visits, hides a mass dial, one of the best I know. If you push the twigs aside you will see the radiating lines on the

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stonework marking the day hours, especially that at 9 a.m. which indicated the time of the parish mass on Sunday. The stump still remains of the iron indicator.

Saints and sinners mingle even at the service of the altar. What moves me to say this is an extract from the Assize Rolls of 1306 which Salzman gives in his *History of Hailsham* (p. 39) concerning one William Crull, 'chaplain of Litlington'—this may mean not the parish priest but one assisting at a chantry there. He is described as sitting with disorderly companions at the tavern, and the agreement of this idle company was that the one who drank least paid for all. This led to a sequel of disorder, and William had to appear before the Justice and pay part of a fine of two marks; not a light fine as money went then. Let me say, for I happen to know, there have also been some saintly priests at the altar of Litlington.

A well-known ballad of Scott says, 'The sun shines fair on Carlisle wall.' It makes me think of Litlington ensconced on a shelf above the Cuckmere with the wide spaces of the river and looking out to the west. The sun shines fair on the village and its ancient church, not much bigger in size, I should think, than when 'Lytel' came and made his 'town' here.

On the other side of the river, perched on the edge of a cliff of chalk, is the ancient hamlet of Frog Firle. Like almost every one of the scattered hamlets of the Cuckmere it is mentioned in Domesday Book, but with a history going beyond.

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It had in the past a manor house and a succession of families of much consequence. Frog Firle, like many Saxon names, has a pleasant jingle and rhythm, but what it means I have not been able to discover.

Higher up the stream is Alfriston, which probably means Alfric's tun, some old sea-rover it is likely who followed Ella from 'Cymen's ora' to the onslaught on Regnum, and through long ways of down and weald to the storming again and fierce slaughter of Anderida, then—though all this is airy supposition—settled here, battle weary, on his portion, among pleasant meadows and hill-pastures and not too far from the sea. So much has been written of Alfriston, for it is a favourite haunt of tourists, that I will only say that few places in Sussex or in England have so many marks of a picturesque past as this. The church has the unusual shape of a Greek cross. It was built all at one time and is a mingling of two styles, the Decorated and Perpendicular. It was probably the gift of the great family of St. Clairs who dwelt at West Firle. The church stands on a pre-historic tumulus at the edge of the Tye, a Saxon word for common. Close by is the Clergy House, a fifteenth-century timbered building, now held by the National Trust. The village possesses a cross, the only complete one of mediæval date in the county, and there are at least three inns of considerable interest. Two are of Tudor date, the George (older than the name suggests), and the Market Cross, and the third, the Star, goes, in its

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history, into the Middle Ages, and must be reckoned among the famous English hostelries.

Lullington is the name of a dwindled village a mile above Litlington. The church stands on a spur of the Downs opposite Alfriston among ancient elms. It is one of several which contend for the distinction of being the smallest in England. The fact is Lullington is only a fragment of a church. The nave has gone; you can trace the lines of its foundation and see outcrops of its walls in the turf of the churchyard. That queer creature, the visitor who goes about with knife or other tool to carve his name, has especially favoured Lullington. There are quite a large number of names of these silly-heads inscribed on its stones.

Farther on is Longbridge, which, as its name implies, was regarded as a great achievement in its day. It replaced the shallow ford with its inconveniences and dangers. We can think of it as a 'long' bridge, crossing, on lines of wooden piles, bogland, oozing mud and running water. It is no longer a 'long' bridge; a single arch of brick unites a causeway on each side of the stream. The same has happened at Excett; a short span of iron has replaced that wonder of the seventeenth century, 'the brege bilt with stone'. The building of a bridge in far-off days was as costly and as meritorious as the building of a church.

Longbridge gave its name to a hundred, and became the gathering-place of a 'moot' of neighbouring parishes. A bridge is a place where, usually, several roads meet. There are two other

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bridges in Sussex which have given names to hundreds. One is Chichester, which is in the hundred of Stockbridge, that is the bridge of stakes built by the Saxons over the narrow waters of the Lavant outside the south gate. The other is Rotherbridge, where it spans the Western Rother.

Some Sussex bridges, especially those of ancient time, like that of Woolbeding, and a very few others, are, with their sturdy cut-waters, ribbed arches and fine parapeting, things of enduring beauty and grace. For centuries they have served mankind, combining dignity with usefulness. Excett bridge, the present Longbridge, and Sussex bridges of later days, are mean things.

Of the five rivers which make up the waterways of Sussex four have a castle at or near the entry. There is Arun, tower-crested, just at the crossing of the Tarrant; Bramber at the narrowing of the Adur; Lewes dominates the Ouse; and at the mouth of the Rother is Rye, which may be described as half burgh, half town. Is the Cuckmere an exception? Certainly the river is not large compared to the others, and no town of size or importance has ever stood by its waters. Of the five the Cuckmere must always have been the least frequented, yet as an inlet and tidal stream it gave access to villages and to small settlements; also along its course were bridges and fords belonging to roads which ran east and west, and all these were vulnerable.

There is at least the sound of a tradition in the

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name 'Burlow Castle'. This is given to a spur of the Downs which thrusts itself like a huge bastion into the marshes above Alfriston. It is near to Longbridge which also marks a ford, as old probably as human beginnings in this part of Downland. Moreover, close under Burlow Castle, between it and Longbridge, is a large mound, artificially made. It has no name except that of the 'Rookery', a word which only describes trees which have been allowed to grow, and birds which come to it for shelter, yet here is undoubtedly one of the best existing examples in Sussex of a Norman 'motte and bailey'. You can still see the lines of vallum and fosse which enclosed it and trace out two bailies with bridge ends and protective returns. 'The Rookery', to give its present unmeaning name, is complete as a defensive work, and though so remarkable is among the least known bits of ancient Sussex.

A reason for this may be that both the motte and bailey, and the outlying mass of chalk called Burlow, are castles without history. Both stand at a river crossing remote in time, but, so far as I know, not a scrap of historical record exists, not a single allusion of past writers. There is in the British Museum among the collection of papers known as the 'Burrell Manuscripts' a tinted view of the 'Ruins of Burlow Castle' by Grim, and this shows some scattered stones; also the antiquary, M. A. Lower, mentions that he heard an old man say that he remembered stones once lying about on the summit. To-day the sward is even and

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unbroken and no line of defensive work can be detected.

There may be an explanation of this. Man has always been a fighting animal and from earliest times the crossings of the Hundred bridge, or fordway just above it, would demand guardianship and defence. The word 'BurLOW' is a Saxon term for a defended place, and just under the summit, close by Milton Court, a great number of coins of the Saxon period, chiefly silver pennies, have been found, showing that the place was inhabited at that time. It would appear that when the Normans arrived and took over the rule of the river, they preferred the form of defensive work they were accustomed to and reared the motte in the place of the stockaded hill-top.

There is another consideration. The castles we have mentioned which guard the openings of the other rivers of Sussex, of these three were heads of rapes and homes of great lords and their retinues. All have history. They had sieges we can read about, stormings and sometimes burnings. There are such occurrences in the histories of Rye, Hastings, Lewes, Bramber and Arundel, but no event of this kind occurs in the story of the Cuckmere, or nothing of outstanding importance. There were fights in plenty at the outlet where the river meets the sea with sea-rovers, smugglers and, in later days, French privateers. These were encounters not at all infrequent, but they do not belong to the big and decisive events.



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Certainly, far off in the twilight time, there were the inroads, burnings and slaughterings by Saxon raiders. All along the Cuckmere, above and below Longbridge, there are homesteads and villages whose very names—Alfriston, Litlington, Arlington, Hellingly—tell us of their coming and settling, and, as a prelude to this, there would be fighting and wastage. It was the Saxons' way when they made new homes. But these are all forgotten sagas: part of the lost stories of 'old, unhappy, far-off things'. Burlow Castle and the Norman motte are now solitary places hardly noticed or known.

Berwick village and church stand on rising ground a mile or more from the river. This may be for the same reason that many inhabited places which date from long ago, like those of the Mediterranean basin, the Rhine valley, Edinburgh perched on a rock, and likewise Bamburgh and many another place found it good for their health and welfare to be a little way off from sea and riverways.

Berwick as a name may be derived from the Saxon *bere wic*, which was given to a detached and dejected portion of an estate. This describes Berwick which in Domesday Book is spoken of as an outlying portion of the royal manor of Edward the Confessor's queen. It may be a further reason that the church stands where it does that on its south side in the churchyard is a tumulus which was there and was a sacred site before the church was reared. This mound of mystery is

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smaller than that of Alfriston and stands apart from the church. I find as soon as I begin to describe a place I talk about the church. The fact is that nearly everywhere in this land of ours the past history and the touch of many centuries are especially gathered there and still to an extent are visible. There are other sources of the history of an old village: the homes of great families, though nearly all these have been swept away for homes more comfortable; place and field-names, which often have fugitive references to very early and twilight times; but nearly always it is the church alone which tells with some completeness changes and movements of the past.

There is much of interest in this little building. It has charm and some beauty. Much of it dates from about 1220 and 1350, but there are signs of an older erection. Three things are worth noting. A recessed tomb, probably a 'founder's' tomb, in the chancel built to serve also the annual ancient solemnity, which seems to have appealed very much to old worshippers, of the 'burial' of the consecrated bread, 'the body of the Lord', on Maundy Thursday until the dawn of Easter morning. It was a bit of ritual with a meaning understandable and suggestive. This Easter sepulchre is a beautifully worked piece of early geometrical Decorated. The font is unusual; it is built into the west wall. There are two other fonts of this character in the county: at Telscombe and Tarring Neville. I do not know whether to describe the chancel screen as ancient

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or modern; I believe it has a little of one and much of the other.

Berwick possesses, like Alfriston, a Tye, which etymologically means a piece of free and unenclosed land, but this 'tye' belies its name; it has been appropriated and enclosed quite a hundred years. I dare say it was done in a respectable fashion, that is, by an Act of Parliament, and at a time when working people were largely inarticulate.

Among the rectors of Berwick are several with honoured names. There was Prebendary John Nutt, to whom a memorial can be seen on the chancel floor. He became rector in 1617, was ejected when Puritans became dominant in 1653, and left behind a manuscript of jottings, 'Parochalia', which have been published in the *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, Vol. VI. The most outstanding name is that of Edward Boys Ellman, who came here in 1846 and was for sixty years rector. He was son of John Ellman of Glynde, the well-known farmer, who developed and made world-famous the Sussex breed of Southdowns. Parson Ellman was a priest who visited his people, loved them, was a friend of all the children and intimate with the babies, and the little church was well filled on Sundays. He will always be remembered by Sussex lovers as the author of *Reminiscence*, one of the most delightful of books in the county's literature and which has gone through several editions. Here we have a detailed picture of church life, village thought and ways of looking at

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things, which belong to 'the light of a day that is gone'.

At Arlington the river becomes but a narrow stream. A wide patch of water near the church is called 'Bell Hole', a term of mystic meaning. What does 'bell' stand for in word ancestry? In this district the word occurs in 'Bell Tout', the broken earthwork above Birling Gap, a 'Bell-hole' at Bosham, and there is Bellham, Bellreed, and inns all of which have distant beginnings, called Eight Bells, Six Bells and other Bells. In almost every instance given there are no bells of that number, or ever were, in the belfries of the church tower near where they adjoin. The old vicar, Thomas Bunston, who for thirty years watched and cared for church and parish, and gathered through those years the history and folklore of the district, saw in the word a probably surviving term of the Celts, the little dark people who lived here before the Romans arrived. Is it a link, he asked, with Bel, Baal, the sungod of Eastern peoples, and worship brought over on one of the migratory waves? He thought also he caught sight of this sungod of a lost race in the incised figure which looks towards Arlington from the Wilmington Downs, the sun as a traveller and his two great staves marking by the shadows they cast the earing time and reaping time as well as the solstices of each year.

Arlington parish is large in area but in shape all atwist. It extends itself like the fingers of a hand and takes in on the southern side Milton Court,

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on the north Claverham and Sessingham, and it bulges on the east to include Michelham. Arlington is a parish of ancient homesteads, and no fewer than seven are moated or show signs of having been so. It lies on the edges of the Abbot's Wood, one of the largest pieces of virginal forest left in Sussex, and though to-day remote and reached by narrow roads, it stood of old on the line of the chief west and east highway.

The church of St. Pancras of Arlington must be reckoned among the very oldest in Sussex. Its walls and architectural features literally span the ages. I know of no church, certainly in this part of England, with so many visible signs of moving centuries. It is on the site of a remote pagan cemetery. Urns with human ashes have been dug up of the Bronze Age, and one or two of these are to be seen in the church. There is early Saxon work, 'long and short' at the coigns and a double splayed window turned with Roman brick. It may well be a church at least begun by the eager missionaries sent out by Wilfrid from Selsey, and the dedication, Saint Pancras, gives further likelihood to this. Every style of architecture mingles about this little building from Saxon onward, and the pleasing oaken chancel screen worked by a wood-carving class of boys at Mayfield thirty years ago gives the latest touch. In the porch will be seen a number of curious markings which are variously called pilgrim signs and masons' marks, but what they mean we do not know. On a south buttress is a 'mass dial'.

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Here I would lay a flower on a grave outside not far from the east wall. It is that of Thomas Bunston, more than thirty years vicar of the parish, who loved every stone of the church and who loved the faces of his people. He was one of the poorest of parsons—as was Chaucer's good clerk—yet in his incumbency he did great things—restored the church, added to its comeliness, built the schoolhouse, and wrote several excellent booklets on place-names, folklore and lingering traditions. He loved Arlington.

Remote from town he ran his godly race,  
And ne'er had changed nor wished to change his place.

Higher up the stream is Horsebridge. In an earlier and purer form it is Herst-Bridge. A mile beyond the Cuckmere loses its identity, parting into two streamlets, one taking rise in the woods of Possingworth and the other in Heathfield Park. In the fork where the Cuckmere divides is the village church and part of the wide parish of Hellingly. Several great houses, some manorial, existed in this parish, but shorn to-day of their early splendour and importance. There is The Broad, which looks out to the high road going towards Heathfield, rebuilt in the early eighteenth century and as fair a work of the Georgian period as could be found. Horselunges, a moated house of Henry VII., recently restored to some of its first beauty by Walter Godfrey. The name is a perversion of Herst Lyngyver, the latter word being that of a medieval owner.

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Bowship is a name of curious history and goes back to the Laws of the Saxon King, Edward the Elder. I believe I am right in saying that all three of these noble buildings are now glorified tea-houses. The church of Hellingly is of the late Norman period, replacing an earlier structure. There are fragments of a Norman font embedded in the inside wall of the north-east chapel. On the south side of the chancel is a 'twin window' of about King John's time, of simple and quiet charm, and which closely resembles another in the same position in Pevensey parish church.

The Cuckmere has not always been called Cuckmere; the name Wandelmestrow sometimes occurs, and is a fitting name for a wandering waterway. In its course from the forest of The Weald are several bridges and watermills and of these some history and details are given by the Rev. Walter Budgen in the 1909 number of the *Eastbourne Natural History, Photographic and Literary Society*. We generally learn of the existence of a bridge by the occasion of quarrels and proceedings in courts of law to compel someone to repair it. The builders were in ancient times deemed pious benefactors, but those on whom the long upkeep fell got no praise. In 1283 the Abbot of Bayham is summoned about some petty repairs to Leabridge. This is marked in the ordnance map on the eastern side of the two streamlets. In 1200 a question arose about the little mill, a little lower down, which, I believe, still functions, between Ralph of the Broad and the monks of

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Otham. Horsebridge is mentioned in 1285 when a presentation is made that it is 'seriously insufficient'. At Hempstead Mill a quarrel arose with the Prior of Michelham about some flood water.

Every student of the past knows that not seldom it is quarrels and clashings which keep name and fame alive. We should know little, perhaps nothing at all, of these water-crossings—when they began and who built them—were it not for bickerings in Leet court or Hundred court.

A ramble on the marshes and by the winding, wayward, up and down course of the Cuckmere estuary on a bright exhilarating day of winter, such as sometimes comes in January and February, can be pure joy. I have happy recollections of crisp air, a tingling in my ears as the keen winter wind passes by, and the sight of home birds and winter migrants in quite vast numbers at the open waters. I do not dare to speak of strange visitors who tarry at this lonely spot year after year on their long flights over seas and continents. I am not sufficiently an ornithologist to specify them, but it is an age-long gathering ground of many kinds. There have been many threats to the ancient peace of this place: the ambition of some people is to have an hotel or commercial aviation ground or glorified tea-gardens or something else. So far all projects have been defeated, but I greatly fear some day something of this kind will succeed, so strong is the shopkeeping instinct of our race, and then the estuary—the only se-



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questered one left in the county—will be forsaken by a large number of birds which love solitude. I would say again I have no dislike of my own kind. I love human faces as much as anybody. But surely some spots should be kept in their primeval solitudes; man is not the only interesting creature in this world. After all, we know that many of these business schemes are not put out in pure philanthropy, they are conceived in the interests of money-makers and of those whose gospel is dividend return.

On the 'mere' there is a short water cut made about a hundred or perhaps more years ago. The old sinuous way of the river had become so shallow and so troublesome for barges and light draught vessels to work that the Commissioners of the Levels cut the present straight waterway. If I may turn aside from my subject, let me say the first person to traverse the new cut was John Lower, barge-master of Alfriston, who is chiefly to be remembered to-day as the father of Richard Lower, the whimsical dominie of Chiddingly and author of *Tom Cladpole*, the raciest bit of literature now existing in the Sussex dialect. 'Dickie's' son is still better known, Mark Anthony Lower, the begetter, if not actually the founder, of the Sussex Archæological Society. Old John Lower was skipper of his own barge and made coasting expeditions. That was in the days when Alfriston could still call itself a Sussex port.

By the 'new' cut all the way from Excett bridge to the haven on the eastern bank is a right-

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of-way. I mention this because on other parts of the marsh the wanderer is likely to be challenged as a trespasser.

I hardly ever have roamed these levels and estuary without seeing one or two herons. These great birds are impressive, whether seen still, motionless, with poised beak, patient through hours, waiting to strike, or when they rise with slow flapping wings and trailing legs and pass over the land. Moorhens and coots are most abundant. They are creatures which seem to enjoy life to the full. I like the *kek-kek* of the former; it is harsh, grating, but fits in most musically among wild solitudes. These birds can live while many others starve, for their diet is very varied: slugs, worms, insects, larvae, grass, grain and other things. It is fortunate in the uncertainties of life not to be too dainty about food, both among birds and men. Frank Buckland, the well-known naturalist, could eat, I believe, with unperturbed appetite, shark cutlets, whale's flippers, green frogs, common snakes if well boiled, stewed slugs and other abominations. Surely he reached among mankind a very peak of gastronomic achievement. With birds it is evident that those of accommodating stomach such as moorhens and many waders live, when others in the rigours of winter and when fresh waters are frozen must die.

I count the coot a thing of beauty. I like his attire of sooty black and of grey with the one patch of gleaming white on the forehead. So also is the moorhen. He has a perky tail and white lateral

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feathers. The name is unfortunate, for the last place to look for one is on a moor. The old meaning of 'moor' is that of mire, mud—they are allied words. A better description is the name of water-hen in partial use.

The Cuckmere, or as it was sometimes of old called, the Wandelmestrow, is a river the least considerable as regards its length of any of the other waterways of Sussex, but all its reaches and the hamlets which edge its wavering lines are linked by their very names in an expressive way to Saxon beginnings.

## CHAPTER IV

### SONGS AND SUB-SONGS OF BIRDS

THERE is a stile I frequent during the early months of summer on the edge of a wide expanse of woodland and brushwood. It belongs to a Sussex duke, but I am a principal possessor, for I see far more of the estate, and I believe I enjoy it far more than the ducal owner. One drawback, however, of my form of proprietorship is that I am unable, when I dislike a gamekeeper, to discharge him. There is one I occasionally meet slouching along with a gun and ever on the look-out for birds he calls 'vermin'. All magpies, hawks, jays, crows, owls, pigeons, nightjars and other interesting birds come under this head, creatures which have lived here, dwelt in the land, for ages beyond reckoning, but which are suspected of interfering with the sacred pheasant or partridge and so must be wiped out. It is, I know, usual for the Nature-lover to speak highly of the gamekeeper. He is pictured in velveteens and gaiters, with the scent of the fields about him and wise in wood-lore and bird-lore. Has not Richard Jefferies written a most engaging book under the title of *The Gamekeeper*? Yet some of them I have come across fill me with loathing. I can discover no imagination in them, no love of fair things or of the wild, furtive creatures

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which live about them. They are Peter Bells. Those I usually meet seem terribly disappointed if they return from their rounds without shooting a kestrel or a barn owl.

Early in May as I sat on my stile I noticed a small bird hovering about in the undergrowth. It was of olive-green above, greyish yellow below, and with a streak of white over the eye. Now these are features belonging to two or three of our warblers. The willow-wren, chiffchaff and wood-wren could be described in identical terms, and it would need alert eyes and close bird knowledge to distinguish the difference. My bird must be one of these three, and I wondered which. Then it was he announced his name to me. He perched on a tree and commenced two strident, monotonous notes which proclaimed him the chiffchaff. To the eye he looks all but exactly like his cousin the willow-wren or his other cousin the woodwren, but to the ear he is unmistakable. In song these three are wide apart.

These three birds have a further resemblance beside their quiet colouring and line of form. Their sub-song is almost identical. I suppose it is known to my readers that all singing birds possess, beside the song which distinguishes them, another and often wholly distinct song, or rather it is a warble in quiet undertones. Those who have heard the blackbird soliloquizing in its covering of green, or the dainty trills, like an inward murmur, of lesser whitethroat and sedge-warbler, will know what I mean. The sub-song

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is low and as though sung to itself. It is the primitive stage of song, and some species, as swallows, martins, starlings and spotted fly-catcher, never pass beyond it.

It is only in recent years the study of a bird's sub-song as distinct from the full music itself has been found to be of profound interest and importance. It is thought by most leading ornithologists who have written on bird song, as, E. M. Nicholson, Walter Garstang, and that charming lover and observer, meet wife of her husband, Viscountess Grey, that this low twitter, so often unlike the bird's proper song, is the primitive, original, ancestral music of birds, and held in common by groups of related species (as to-day swallow, martin and swift are related). It was their first ditties, and from these in the struggle to exist, in the effort, each of his kind, to make himself known and recognized by the hen, distinctive songs have evolved. The chiffchaff looks much like his cousins the willow-wren and woodwren while he hops about, also his sub-song is much the same, but when he announces himself with two strident notes there is no likelihood of confusion, and mate finds mate. So the reed-warbler and marsh-warbler, the tree pipit and meadow pipit, the marsh titmouse and cole titmouse, they are closely alike to the eye but wide apart in song. They tell you their names when they begin to sing.

One may say that the full song of birds, joyous and jubilant, is the primitive murmur, the

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warble, lifted up, its beads of sound threaded together and made complex and warm by emotion. There is undoubtedly an aesthetic quality in the songs of those whose notes take hold of the human listener, as the nightingale, blackcap, skylark and garden-warbler. They are not animated musical boxes but they are music lovers, singing because they love to sing and varying their notes to the feelings which at the moment possess them, of love in its deep tendernesses, and rivalry in its challenges.

Poets and children have tried but with no great success to reproduce the 'sweet jargonings' of bird song. The song belongs to another plane of sound from that of the human voice, another realm of melody, and no phonetic notation, no human lippings, can render it. Yet I notice most country school-children make their list of birds by a playful rendering of bird sounds. I have heard the 'door-creak' given for the greenfinch and the similitude is rather happy, and of course the cry down the lane, 'a little bit of bread and no chee-ee-se', 'sis-ee-swee', for at least some of the skylark's song. These resemblances are but wide and fanciful. Gilbert White tells us of a thrush in his garden that called to him, 'White-hat, White-hat'; and there is a story a child gives, in one of those happy efforts of bird essays which W. H. Hudson has done much to promote by his bequest, of a thrush which said, 'Mrs. Hewitt, Mrs. Hewitt' so often and so clearly in their village that at last Mrs. Hewitt went to the door and said, 'Yes.'

## SONGS AND SUB-SONGS OF BIRDS

Sub-song and full song is a story of ages of effort; birds, each of their kind striving to perpetuate themselves, to proclaim by louder note and fuller range personal identity.

For birds of showy plumage—stonechat, shrike, kingfisher, goldfinch—there is no need of loud assertive notes, and their music does not pass beyond the sub-song. Also large birds, solitary and conspicuous, are sufficient to the eye without song. Hawks do not sing and owls are noisy at night just to make their presence known because it is night. Most of our country's great songsters are small birds, inconspicuous, who sing chiefly to make their presence known, to warn off the rival and invite the hen. When hens sing, as they sometimes do, excepting the robin, their utterance never passes beyond the sub-song.



## CHAPTER V

### GLYNDE AND THE CABOURN

I GOT out at Glynde station amid a piercing clatter of endless tin cans. There is, I believe, a milk depot or creamery somewhere about this spot, and you are informed of the fact whenever you draw near to Glynde station.

Half-way to the village is a smithy whose entrance is a vast horseshoe. It is modern, well built, and it is considered picturesque, for it figures on picture post cards. I confess I prefer the old ramshackle type which has grown to its job in anyhow fashion, which advertises itself with the beat of the hammer, and where you catch sight of the burning sparks that fly like chaff from the threshing floor.

Glynde village to the eye of a stray visitor is noticeable for two things. The limeworks is one. They give a dusty look to the place; they have created rows of dwelling-houses well built, useful and ugly, cottages which never will and never can assimilate themselves to the place. The other object of interest—at least to me—is the church. It is neither old nor beautiful, but it has charm; it makes a homely appeal, and did I live at Glynde I feel sure I should love the plain-faced, squarely built, aisle-less, chancel-less village

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church. It was built in the middle of the eighteenth century, when the Gothic tradition had died out, and the English renaissance of Wren had lost its savour. Its only claim to elegance are a pediment with deep eaves which looks out to the roadway, and a cornice which runs round the building, both with well-formed dentil work underneath.

The builder of Glynde Church—or one ought to say rebuilder, for an earlier one of ancient ancestry stood on the spot before it—was Richard, Lord Trevor, of Glynde Place. What is more important, he was Lord Bishop of the See and Palatinate of Durham at a time when that northern episcopate had a revenue from broad lands and coal royalties equal to many a petty principality. The Bishop was abundantly rich and no niggard with his money. He built this church, and everything about it, outside and inside, is as good and substantial as money could make it: stone from the Portland quarries, thick slates from Westmorland, pews deep, roomy, and of heavy oak, and a noble organ gallery. The stained-glass windows are a notable feature of the church; they are Flemish of the sixteenth century with the warm yellow light of silver stain. The Bishop must have taken some trouble in collecting it from abroad. If the sermon drags at Glynde Church there is at least some refreshment in studying the scenes and figures shown in these roundels, for they are quaint, queer and odd, and some, it must be said, are of a somewhat light and jokesome character.

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The Bishop also refashioned Glynde Place to ease himself when down at intervals from Auckland Castle. He built the vicarage and added to the worth of the parson's living, which hitherto had been a starving; he made some picturesque cottages into comfortable dwellings, and the roads around, including the High Street of the village, erstwhile loose, rutty and steeply undulating, he made into ways of comfort for man and beast. The world holds, and I think rightly, in high esteem those who make for wayfarers roads and bridges, and of the number of the blessed ones let Bishop Trevor be reckoned.

Beyond the church and on the other side of the road is a bit of Tudor England: some cottages, tile-roofed and timbered. They are the oldest things I could discover in Glynde. Beyond, a road turns to the left and leads to the Downs. It is miry with the churning of many cart wheels. Close by is the home of a famous farmer of the early nineteenth century, John Ellman, whose title to greatness is that he developed by cross-breeding and rare judgment the race of sheep known now all over the world, the Southdown. There are many claims to the world's gratitude. He is held to be a benefactor who makes two blades of grass to grow in the place of one, so also one who gives to the multitude a fertilizing thought. John Ellman's claim to greatness is that he was a farmer out of the common ruck of farmers, original and venturesome, and so gained a new thing.

## GLYNDE AND THE CABOURN

One cannot go far on a walk, that is my experience, without something happening of the human incidences of life. I had come out on my day's tramp to look at Glynde and investigate the Cabourn with mind detached from common day things, when here at Ellman's corner I ran against one of my own species who interested me greatly and, like the Ancient Mariner, held me with his glittering eye. He was a tramp, a vagabond, but one of an unusual sort; he had brains, a dour wit, and was determined, so it seemed to me, never to work and never to starve. Although this recital has nothing to do with nature beauty or with ancient footmarks, I hope my readers will forgive me if I tarry a minute to touch on a side of our many-sided humanity.

My vagabond was reclining on the roadside bank. He asked me the time of day, but this is a dodge I am used to; it is a way of starting a conversation. Your true wanderer never buys a newspaper; he picks up the world's goings-on from passers-by. I supplied him with a match to light a fragment of tobacco in his cutty bowl, and felt bound to hand him a bit of Player's Mixture to assist in getting it alight. I was not wearing clerical attire, so my chance acquaintance felt free to express himself on everything in his own language. He had no use, it seemed, for politicians or parsons, and was not on speaking terms with farmers or policemen. I could not find anybody or anything he agreed with; everything that is, is wrong.

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'Rum world this,' he said; 'almost everybody on this planet is mad; in fact it takes me all I can do to keep me balance.'

I had not thought of the whirligig of the world in this light, or that insanity was, as he seemed to suggest, an infectious complaint. Were King Lear and some wise men of to-day right in the surmise that we all stand on the bounds and confines of upside-down-dom?

'Yes,' said my philosopher, 'I feel sometimes that even I must be a Bedlamite; it takes me all I can do to keep clear-headed in this queer world.'

From things in general my wayside Bergson entered into things in particular.

'Tell me, why do swankies at big restaurants spend ten shillings—aye, mor'n that—on a supper and I make do, if I'm fortunate to have the pennies, with sevenpenny sausage and mashed potatoes?'

This was an unanswerable question, so I was silent.

'Why do I go about in worn-out boots—now look at these—and sleep sometimes under a haystack, while others course the country in a tip-top motor car? I say it's an uneven world, an unfair world. Here's another question: Why do parsons preach about the blessedness of poverty and meekness and live in the best house in the parish? Tell me that.'

Here I felt disposed to dispute both his premises and deductions, but then I saw he was quite above anything I could say. I have noticed there

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are some advantages as regards serenity of mind in being quite cocksure.

‘Did ye ever hear of Oliver Cromwell? He was a man if you like. He blew with his cannon half the castles down and half the churches down in England. We want Oliver here again to straighten things out.’

I left this wayside son of thunder musing on the strange world he lived in, and on the greatness of Oliver Cromwell. He looked, so it appeared to me, as though he had never done an honest day’s work in his life; but still, I know of a few philosophers who speak also in large tones of which just the same could be said.

When you leave the lane end I have mentioned you enter the Neolithic ages—that is if you have a soul awake to solemn things and can hear the whispers of Mother Earth. Everywhere around on these Downs are dim footprints, faint traces of races who lived beyond the sky-line of human history. I do not know of any other part of the Sussex Downs where these vestiges are so numerous and so well marked as around the Caburn. Here are paths hollowed by human feet, now disused and grass-grown, which were old when the Romans arrived; lynchets, the terraced lines of an ancient agriculture, and, earlier still, faint marks on the slope rising above Bible Bottom, marks like square irregular window-panes, which tell of the first ages when over the land-bridge from the Continent were brought seeds of cereals, precious things from the Far East, and there sown in little

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plots, and indicating that man had passed from the wandering and hunting stage to the pastoral. On the high ridge are saucer hollows of derelict dew ponds, and here and there barrows where men lie, long dead. In the bottom below is one of the few examples of a valley entrenchment, a class of earthwork we know little about. It has the appearance of an open book and is known in common speech as the Devil's Bible. It is a curious feature of folk-speech that objects like this which look strange, remote, unaccountable, become also awesome, and are put down to the devil. There is the Devil's Dyke above Brighton, the Devil's Jumps beyond Bow Hill, and a Devil's Punch Bowl on Hindhead. Grim is another word for his Satanic majesty, far older, and brought over by the Saxon race from their home beside the Elbe and Weser. We have it in Grim's-pound, the prehistoric village on Dartmoor, Grim's Graves and Grim's Dyke.

There are remoter things on the Caburn than these, and things which still live and lurk about. The badger is one of Britain's oldest inhabitants, and in the quiet of the night he roams these lonely hills. There is the otter, too, which dwells in the brooks and levels below, another gentleman of ancient pedigree. Both are sorely used by that fiercest of all animals, man. Other kinds of creatures which began with them in the morning time of the world have been shot to extinction by sportsmen. May these two I have mentioned of England's remote fauna, in spite of the hard ways



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dealt out to them, continue in their lonely haunts. Surely God meant them to enjoy His world as well as that biped who lords it so.

There are many flowers that dwell in these wide and little-trodden places which are linked with what botanists call the Lusitanian flora—the times when Britain was part of the land area of the Continent and shared in a vegetation much of which has since passed from it. The dainty little orchid, *Our Lady's Tresses*, is one of these. I have seen it in the month of September on the high plateau north of the Caburn in tens of thousands. Other orchids live about, but rare, widely separate, and I will not specify them, and though they came from their southern homes in ages geological, they are uneasy, unsettled migrants, pilgrims still and strangers. Others of the Lusitanian flora are abundant—the thistles, carline and acaulis, cathartic flax, quinsywort, and many beside. These creatures, could they speak, might tell a story of how they struggled ever so hardly for life through the great ice periods and survived when so many of their fellow emigrants perished. There are romances in other worlds than ours.

I have left to the last what my readers may consider the most remarkable of all the objects which meet the wanderer on this part of the Sussex Downs. At the end of the long ridge which moves up above Glynde village you reach the Caburn, one of the most impressive earthworks of the county. The name is Celtic, 'caer bryn,' a fortified hill, so that the term 'mount',

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often put before it, is unnecessary. It is not the largest. Cissbury, which rears itself north of Worthing, covers sixteen times the area. Nor is it very early as prehistoric earthworks go; the straight lateral line of Ranscombe, which lies but a few yards away on the western side, is probably immensely older. Nevertheless Caburn is deeply impressive with its mighty ramparts, duplicated, and on the east, which would be the side most vulnerable, triplicated. This bold height which looks out on the waters of the Ouse and the wet wastes on the east has been in continuous human occupation from about 500 B.C. till the first or second century following the coming of the Romans. The Caburn has been more dug about and written about than any other of the hill strongholds of the South Downs, and if you want to read of its fosse and vallum, postern ways, the dimple of pits, the refuse heaps, are they not all written in the reports and books of General Pitt-Rivers, Hadrian Allcroft, H. S. Toms, down to the survey of Dr. Cecil Curwen?

## CHAPTER VI

### THE MYSTERY STONES OF SUSSEX

THERE is something impressive in solitary upright stones—the menhirs, dolmens and others—that one finds in the waste places of the world. They are voices from a distance, memorials of things great, terrible, or solemn, of which we have lost the clue. Some instinct it is which makes a man rear a stone to mark and make perpetual a great happening. ‘And Jacob took a stone and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.’ It marked for him a crisis in his life, where his soul met God, so for ever the place of the pillar is holy ground.

I remember when a boy taking a solitary walk over a high moor of the Peak country and coming unexpectedly on a circle of upright stones. There was only the sky above, the wide distances of heather around, and a great silence. What did it mean? What was its origin? One seemed to have come suddenly into touch with an unknown world, a lost religion, the memorial of something gone from human memory.

There are lonely stones on the Sussex Downs, and if they are not now upright, or have lost their first place and significance, it is because, I suppose, of unimaginative farmers and the demands

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of a utilitarian age. There is little doubt that the Goldstone, as it is called, in Hove Park is one such. It has been transposed from its original place, it is surrounded by other huge boulders which formed, so I have heard it said, two circles on the Downs to the north. It forms now the central object of a park and gives its name to a sports ground. The meaning and mystery of the thing for most people is lost.

'Sarsen' is the general word in Sussex for these stones. It is probably the clipped form of 'Saracen', which in the early Middle Ages with stories brought by returning crusaders stood vaguely for a people or for forces who fought against God. The sarsens to the wandering shepherd were as creatures cast down, smitten and petrified. 'Mystery stones.' He knows nothing of dim lost ages when all the land of weald and down had an aspect widely different from that of to-day. Geologists tell us of a superincumbent stratum of sandstone, and of how it was worn, washed, denuded by fierce tropical rains and swollen rivers, and how, too, in the oscillations of the pole, or whatever mutation was at work, vast ice-sheets disintegrated the sandstone, and now all that is left are these cores of stone, portions more hard and cohesive than the rest. They lie incumbent on their bed of chalk.

In a county like Sussex, where quarries possessing stone hard and durable are few, boulders like these, huge and ferrous, are valuable. So it has come to pass that in many hamlets and villages

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of Downland they have been used for coigns, bases and stays in the erection of barns and houses. In a village like Alfriston, for instance, the visitor can see them, often broken and trimmed for the purpose, built into the corners of homes and the turnings of walls. Some still lie, however, in their ancient resting-place in the river valley, too huge and heavy for people with only primitive tools to move.

I wonder how many of my readers have noticed that the Dolphin fountain in Brighton Old Steine is surrounded at its base by a group of sarsens! The Steine is the valley of a lost river, the Whalesbourne, and the bed was littered with these great sandstones. The Corporation has caused them to be gathered and cast here. They are usually out of sight during summer and autumn, hidden by the mass of tall reeds and water plants, but when these have fallen the old stones become visible.

Standeane means 'stone dean', a valley of sarsens. These too are gathered and gone, swept off, serving a purpose for bases, and to consolidate flint and rubble walls.

There is a lingering tradition that on the site of St. Nicholas's Church, now the parish church, or until recently reckoned so—the original church of Brighthelmstone has long gone under the sea—there was a circle of stones. Also that the stones around the base which once supported a churchyard cross formed part of this 'Druidical' circle. This plinth of sarsens is still *in situ* just below the south entrance of the church. There are many

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places in Sussex linked with mystery stones; of some indeed their names proclaim it. Steyning, its root is that also of stane, stein, stannings, and it means the -ing or settlement among the stones. There is a Stains in the parish of Funtington and a Steine in Slindon.

In some parts of the Sussex Downs sarsen stones have been so abundant as to become an impediment to agriculture. An area very thickly studded with them must have been the long valley between Stanmer and Falmer. A hundred or more years ago the then Earl of Chichester had the district around his home swept up, and the sarsens were brought, it must have been at much trouble and expense, and placed about the large pond on Falmer Green. Here is now the largest collection of sarsens to be seen in Sussex. They edge the pond and cluster in a considerable heap around the village pump. Some are of great dimensions and weight. A further collection, though less in number and size, are also in the neighbouring village of Stanmer in the park and about the pool.

These stones of mystery are curiously linked with the beginnings of several of our oldest churches. In the ruined church of Maplescombe in Kent, within the apse chancel, there is one sunk in the ground on the spot which formed the site of the altar. At churches not far from this, Kemsing and Halling, several are built into the walls. Trottescliffe and Paddlesworth have each a large sarsen. Hilaire Belloc, in his book, *An Old Road*,

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describes Bishopstoke Church in Hampshire as on the site of a stone circle. Professor Flinders Petrie says he could discern signs of a stone avenue about Addington Church, and that of Stanton Drew in Somerset is placed within 'a veritable valhalla of monumental relics'.

It is likely this could be said of some Sussex churches which lie on the edge of the Saxon twilight, such as Westhampnett, Arlington, Rumboldswyke, Clayton, Singleton and Stoughton.

The worship of stocks and stones died hard. Something in the lonely sarsen, especially when set upright, seemed unaccountable and awesome. There is a strange continuity of pagan and Christian tradition where places and things are concerned. What has once been hallowed in the popular mind is not easily banished.

I have not used the term 'grey-wethers', often applied to these stones, for though the word is descriptive it is not, so far as I have been able to discover, of the Sussex tongue. Nearly all now have been gathered from their primitive resting-places, used as ready and cheap building material, used as paving-stones, or gathered and broken for rockeries, and their significance lost. Only in lonely places they persist as mystery stones, unlike anything else around them, as though aliens and strangers.



## CHAPTER VII

### ALCISTON, CHIDDINGLY, WALDRON

THERE were three of us—an editor, a lawyer and a parson. I will describe further and say that the first is well known to readers of Sussex literature, the second as a delver into the past, who has brought up in his time much precious ore, and the third is known merely as an observer of men and things.

Our start was made at Alciston. Alciston is only one street with a few cottages and an inn aligning it, winding upwards after the manner of country lanes until it loses itself at a steep escarpment of the Downs. I have a grateful recollection of this meandering street, of the Rose and Crown where I have lunched sumptuously on bread and cheese with a lettuce; of a friend who lived in a cosy homestead opposite but has now forsaken Sussex for a place somewhere in the wilds of Essex; and of Postman's Cottage just above where dwells, out of term time, Professor Caroline Spurgeon, whose fame I may say has gone out into many lands as an authority on English literature. With her I have held high discourse, and her little book on *Mysticism in English Poetry* I count among the treasures of my book-shelf. She is a lover of Blake. So am I.

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At the head of the street are clustered three objects of interest: the church; the manor court, now and for long a farm-house but bearing traces of distant ancestry; and an ancient barn. From the days of the Norman Conquest down to the Dissolution in 1538 the manor and fair lands of Alciston were held by the abbot and monks of Battle Abbey, and the many documents and rentals which still survive show them to have been considerate and painstaking landlords. The little grey church must have been built by the monastic owners soon after 1200, though some Norman lights in the chancel indicate an older one on the site. The building is marked by the changes of time, yet it seems to me in the deeply incised mouldings, in the tooling of two piscinae, and in other features, as fresh and comely as when first reared more than 700 years ago.

I remember—it must be twenty years ago—I took a Sunday evensong in this little church. It was a harvest thanksgiving; the place was packed and the hymns and psalms went with loud cheerfulness. We were a happy lot. I preached from the text, 'Yea, a joyful and pleasant thing it is to be thankful,' and thumped the pulpit cushion with such vigour that the dust of many years arose.

While the editor and lawyer went into the church to renew their acquaintance, I stayed outside in the autumn sunshine. People passed me with greeting as they usually do in country places; it is in towns that you are made to feel

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lonely. Among others there passed a comely, well-set-up girl, and I witnessed an incident. A cart rumbled by and the reins were held by a brown-faced Sussex youth. I liked the look of him but apparently the lass did not. He threw to her (and I thought he did it gracefully) a bunch of three marigolds. She caught them and then, instead of putting them into a tuck of her blouse, the jade threw them with defiant air into the boy's face. He went on, or the horse did, stolidly looking ahead. Heigho. Tut, tut!

If she be not fair to me,  
What care I how fair she be?

Then my two friends came out of the little grey church and told me how much I had missed by not being with them.

Now these are only trifling matters of the way-side when I ought to be describing the weighty things of the day's adventures. One of these weighty things is the old barn where in days before King Henry ravaged the land the Abbey grain was stored. Alciston barn is one of the longest in the county, and the vista inside of tie beams, queen posts, collars, struts and braces makes up a wonderful study of fifteenth-century timbering. There is in the half lights of a barn like this some of the solemn mystery of an old church. One wonders whether it had, in the days when Battle Abbey held it, rich gables surmounting the threshing floors such as you see at Glastonbury, Cerne Abbas, and Abbotsbury. The part



THE ABBEY BARN  
ALCISTON



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of the walling where this might have been appears to be torn away.

But the oldest objects we found at Alciston were not church or court farm or medieval barn, but some sarsens, quite a number of them scattered here and there close to the walls of the barn. Hard, brown, striated and weathered by the rains and storms of thousands of years they are far and away the oldest things which litter the floor of Sussex. Could they but speak what a story they would tell of glacial epochs and long dim ages before that, but, although I know Shakespeare said something of sermons in stones and tongues in brooks, the whole world is as silent as the tombs, and it is only we with the shaping spirit of our imagination who give voice to lifeless forms.

We passed from Alciston to Chiddingly by cross-country roads which wind and turn about after the fashion cows make when on a journey. It was late autumn and a soft yellow light lay over the land. I can understand the Hebrew thought, 'the land shall enjoy her Sabbath', for, after the gathering time, a stillness seems to fall on fields and hedgerows, that is, from harvest to the time old husbandmen called Hallowmas, when often great winds begin to blow. The air is heavy with moisture and the grass shimmers all day with dew, gossamers float along, the migrants have gone and almost the only song is the robin's, 'sweet messenger of calm decay'.

When we crossed the high road we left Sel-

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meston on the left. I associate that dumpty little church and spirelet with its splendid vicar, William Douglas Parish, who was there for thirty years, a man of parts and of charm, and everyone who takes interest in what is now the lost language of Sussex, the speech which lived on in vigour from the days when Ella and his followers came over from forest lands of the Weser down to the age of school boards and Cockney penetration, must be grateful to him. He caught and noted down words, phrases, lippings and vocal mannerisms which now are all but lost. I count Parish's *Glossary of the Sussex Dialect* one of the most amusing as well as informing works of the county's literature. He went about among his people with his eyes and ears open, and his soul in tune with the humour and happy talk he heard around him. His book is no common dictionary; it is warm with human interest.

I know of no district in Sussex with so many small farm-steads of charm and beauty as one sees about here. They seem to belong mostly to the late eighteenth century, while the Corn Laws ruled and things were going well with agriculturists. I have heard hard things said about the Georgian period, its dullness and grossness, but builders of to-day could well come and take a lesson from these homes which combine comfort and grace. They are mostly of brick with hoods over the doorways, gardens with box edging, and where grows lavender bush and rosemary. We passed the Dicker, which has an Early Victorian

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church, 1843, as ugly as it could be made; but there are two things I ought to say here: one is that within is a font of white marble brought from Italy, a shallow basin on a slender pedestal, a work of beauty; the other matter of interest is that Owen Emeric Vidal, the first vicar of the parish, went out in 1852 to be Bishop of Sierra Leone, at that time 'a white man's grave', and soon was his grave. One cannot pass the Dicker without mention of one other name, widely known and for years large in the public eye, Horatio Bottomley. Here was his home, his farm and racing stables, and though many stones are now thrown at him, among the people of the Dicker his memory is in high regard. He is in this wide parish a hero beloved.

Just before reaching Chiddingly we passed Muddles Green, the home for more than sixty years of Richard Lower, father of the well-known antiquary, Mark Anthony Lower. Adjoining his cottage is the schoolroom where he dutifully taught, trained and chastised the youth of Chiddingly. This is now superseded by a large County Council building farther along the road. 'Dickie' Lower was a man of parts and personality. In addition to being schoolmaster he acted as parish clerk, road surveyor and general help. His famous poem in racy Sussex speech, *Tom Cladpole's Journey to Lunnun*, showing the many difficulties he met with and how he got 'Safe Home at Last,' had an immense sale chiefly among rural workers, who seemed to understand



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the language and appreciate the humour. In a few months' time twenty thousand copies were sold, and this brought a little more butter to his bread.

It was only for a few minutes we lingered about the church. It has a stone spire clamped with two massive chains; at the hood terminals of the west door are Pelham buckles. Within is the monument by an unknown sculptor of Sir John Jefferay, a Baron of the Exchequer, beruffed and with SS chain of office. A short distance away is the home of the family. It is of brick but dismantled, broken and half gone. There is a granary with Tudor arched entrance and a derelict oast-house.

From Chiddingly by a road which undulates and wanders about it is seven miles to Waldron. On the way, on a bit of high ground, in a wide bay of a lane end, we tarried for mid-day food and much talk. It had a sandy bank, dry and sun-warmed, and the flowers of October, ragwort, spiky agrimony, belated mayweed and tufts of Old Man's Beard flaunted themselves. Over sandwiches, apples, and with these some hot coffee, we held high discourse. The man of the law had visions and looked up to great heights. 'We need once again', he observed, 'a Domesday Survey in this land of England, not like the old one which concerned itself only with money values and state income, but marking, registering, annotating every sign and vestige of the long way we have come.' This was a splendid

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sentiment and we applauded it. Our friend, I might say, knows a good deal about the footmarks of the past. Among other things he has published a book on the Chantries of Sussex, and it is a notable contribution to the story of the county.

Of the editor I would say he is a bit battle weary; he has been fighting a hard, and some of it a losing, fight against the wasters and destroyers. They are many and mighty in this fair land of Sussex. 'I hate much they call modern progress, but one invention at least I hope the Philistines will perfect, that is air travel. It may be', he said, 'we are on the eve of a development when highways will be transferred to the skies, and people in a great hurry will no longer clamour for wider roads, the cutting down of hedges and destruction of trees, but may move to their heart's content in the broad spaces of the sky and allow humble folk to travel quietly and live a minute at a time.'

In this symposium my only offering was to express weariness at the wonderful march of progress and a longing that inventors and discoverers could be persuaded to take a holiday for a few years and let humanity have time to look round and enjoy the world as it is.

The parish of Waldron is large, well-wooded, and has a soil of Hastings sand, ironstone and much clay. In the further adventures of the day we came, at a dip of the road and close to where a small bridge crosses a tributary of the Cuckmere, to Furnace Farm. I would say here that the whole

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story of this spot and of the lost ironworks which belonged to the Great Weald you may read in fullness from the pages of Ernest Straker's book, *Wealden Iron*. The writer tells us that the immediate district is studded with vestiges and signs of ironworks now all but forgotten. There is Cinderwood at Scallow Bridge; a Roman 'bloomery' and mine-pits in Knowle Wood; Marle Green has a Cinderwell; near May Garland Inn are Cinder Banks; while at Stream is still the wide hammer-pond, now edged with water-weeds and a home of coot and moorhen.

At the place I am describing there is mention in 1574, but existing probably long before, of a furnace and forge the property of Sir John Pelham. It remained in his family until 1716 when it passed to the Fullers, whose home is at Lyons Corner, a house a short distance away, of gabled front and mullioned windows. The furnace went out and the forge became silent some years later when the iron industry gravitated northwards. The piping and highly profitable times of the Sussex ironworks were those of war. This was fairly often, what with quarrels with Dutchmen, French and other countries, and turmoils at home. This forge was at its peak of production when Royalist and Roundhead were grappling; then its output was about 400 tons a year, which we may say meant annually the destruction of many acres of Sussex woodland.

Although all that now appears is a smooth green stretch of rising ground, and its noises only

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the cheerful melody of ducks and poultry, it is not difficult to call back the features it possessed through several centuries. There is the hollow where the 'bay' or pond-pen held up the waters and husbanded them for the furnace; the deep gully where a mighty water-wheel gave motive power: there is the place where tilt-hammers made the district clamorous, and you will see even now in the little pathway gleams of broken vitreous slag, and the soil of the garden belonging to the cottage is black with charcoal dust. The cottage is of Sir John Pelham's time, of brick, with tiled and hipped roof and chimney pannelled and corniced. It probably was built for the furnace foreman.

Some writers allude to the wealden portion of Sussex as having been the 'black' country of England. It was never that. The coal was charcoal, clean and smokeless, and no heavy pall hung overhead such as you see in the disfigured lands of the north, but there was the loud thud of tilt-hammers and bright shooting lights when furnace doors were opened, especially through winter nights—a picture of things which now seem alien and strange.

I must touch only lightly on the rest of the day's ramble. Waldron village is diminutive; you might call it a hamlet, and small at that, but it has all the essentials of a parish centre: church, inn, general stores, a school and a smithy. Crossing a field to the left beyond the village, in the depths of a wood, you can find well and distinctly

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marked the castle mound and moat of some great medieval family, possibly the de Denes, who dwelt and ruled here. I have happy recollections of reading a book many years ago, *The House of Walderne*, by A. D. Crake, dealing with this spot and some impossible happenings. Now it is lost to the common gaze among bracken and deep recesses of a wood.

The parish church is of interest as is every old church. The building as it now is was probably the gift of Sybil de Dene early in the thirteenth century. Its walls are of red-flushed ironstone. The oldest thing in it is an immersion font of possibly early Saxon date. It was rescued from a farmyard, and the font basin had been cut down to make it suitable for a drinking trough. All the great ones of the parish through many ages seem to be gathered to sleep within these walls. Here are memorials and ledger stones to Pelhams, Fullers, Courthopes, Dykes, Offleys and others, and I dare say some of the de Denes slumber below. In windows, on walls and at one's feet are heraldic arms, achievements and badges they bore in the daylight and now have no use for. They have reached the inn at the end of the road.

. . . . .

Outside the church, near the chancel wall, is the grave of one I knew well, William John Humble-Crofts, rector of the parish for forty-two years (1882-1924), a scholar of rare classical attainments and a lovable man. I recall, now

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some twenty-five years ago, I arrived at the rectory doorstep wet through with heavy rains, chilled and tired. I had come at his request to preach at a Lenten service, and my home on the south side of the Downs was sixteen miles away. I cycled, and when I started the skies were already dark with threat, and soon rain descended, winds blew and beat upon me so that I was a pretty crumpled-up creature at the end of the journey. How pleasant was the warm welcome, the relief of a hot bath and dry, borrowed clothes! We had service in the old church, and in spite of wild weather there was a fair congregation. We sang in cheerful tones the sad hymns appointed for the season and people listened with much patience to my sermon. Then came supper and eager talk in the cosy study. I started home next morning in the broken lights of a wild March day. So after a quarter of a century, at the end of a long tramp, I linger at a graveside to recall the memory of a good man, one who served with love and loyalty his people and walked humbly with God.

## CHAPTER VIII

### A SUNDAY OFF

I HAD a Sunday off, and this in the long years of my country incumbency was a great event. I ought to explain that a country parson's life, while it is, or may be, crowded with many delights, can also be very humdrum. I have known what it is to work for fifteen years at a stretch without a Sunday away, except on rare occasions when I have exchanged duty with another country parson and done his work for relief and change while he has done mine. There are a few people who imagine a country parson's life is a perpetual holiday. He has, these fanciful folk say, a charming old vicarage and a charming old garden and lives among peaceful rural surroundings. It sounds tranquil and caterpillar-like. But there is another side. I have had two churches to serve, two parishes united in order to make a 'living', with remote farm-steads and cottages to visit covering 4,000 acres. A country parson is, or he certainly should be, a general factotum, a maid-of-all-work; it is his duty to mind everybody's business and not neglect his own.

Some of my readers will exclaim against this. They will say, 'I never spend a week-end at Eastbourne or any of the other pleasure grounds of

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Sussex without meeting parsons about.' That may be so, though I still think it extraordinary; and besides, there are a few of my cloth of whom it is not unkind to say they ought never to have been ordained. They would make, it may be, excellent lawyers, keen, adroit and ready-tongued, or professional politicians—there is such a trade—or grocers, or inn-keepers, or something else, but as parsons they have blundered, and if you meet them sunning themselves on Sunday at Bognor or Worthing you can well be sorry for them; they have missed their way.

Where shall I spend my vacant Sunday? Like the proverbial busman I feel I really must go to church. I want to have the luxury of sitting in a pew and listening to another voice than my own, and watching how some other country parson does his job. Two years before, when last I had a Sunday off, I went to Oxford to dream among dreaming spires. When I returned, a humorist wished to make a bet over my vacant Sunday, as to whether I had kept it by not going at all to church; the only way, he averred, that a parson ought to keep a Sunday off. But as it happened I had attended four services and listened to three sermons. That put the enemy to confusion.

Some miles away from my home, I will not say how many, there nestles what I may fairly say is one of the most beautiful churches in Sussex. Its architecture is of that gracious period when the Norman style suddenly threw off—it was quite sudden—its heavy forms and blossomed into a fair



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Transitional; when round arches broke at the centre and became pointed, pointing to heaven; and massive piers became pillars with undercut foliated capitals, and from the central pillar threw off light detached shafts, combining strength and delicacy. This church to which I gravitated at the foot of the hills on Sunday morning is one of the best examples for a village church that I know of in its rich early Gothic.

Now a Sunday morning in England, in spite of all that motorists are doing, has still a quality, if only you will get off the high road, of deep peace and tranquillity. Following a field path, there was, what I may call, an audible stillness. There was the drone of tiny insects, the faint swish in the summer breeze of meadow-grass waiting for the mower, high up a lark sang, and yet, though I cannot explain it, with all these everyday noises, a Sabbath feeling was abroad; it was as though the long worship of ages on this holy day returned and gave a spiritual touch to the land.

Very soon there smote my ears the great bells, a full octave they are, of the Priory Church to which I was wending. Of all forms of music in this world there is none so eerie, far off from the common sounds of life, as church bells. It is the voice of many ages, the language of pure emotion, primitive elemental, discarnate.

As I got nearer there was a growing ecstasy in their movement. I heard them singing the *Te Deum*. Clang-clang-clang; cherubim and seraphim are swinging their golden censers. Clang-

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clang-clang; the blessed apostles, the learned doctors, the holy virgins are twanging their harps. Clang-clang-clang; angels with rainbow wings, and blessed martyrs whose crowns of thorns have turned into crowns of gold, are tuning up sackbuts and psalteries; they are all going to join us this morning at the service with their own joyful noise.

I love to sit in an old church such as this and do some dreaming. It is good for soul and body, and when you keep very still a holy place will tell you secret things. So, for me, the ages went back and I saw cowed figures moving about in the Priory Church. They came down from a stairway door which was up in the north transept near where I sat, and soon there was the solemn drone of plain-song, psalm and versicle, and there came to me the old monks' prayer at the Office of Prime, 'O everlasting Jesus . . . visit us, we pray Thee, at this hour with Thy grace and mercy; that so throughout the day we may find peace and joy in all that ministers to Thy praise and glory.' I call these words both lovely and befitting at the first morning hour.

People came in by twos and threes and quietly took their places; overhead the bell music was soft and distant, and the moment the organ began their sound died away. I will not tell you of the service and sermon except that it befitted an ancient sanctuary and a country congregation; reverent and with the joy of happy worship. The vicar's face was an interesting one, marked

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with deep lines, and his hair stood out like a white halo. Before he came to this peaceful spot he had spent many years in a slum part of a northern city, where pretty children have grubby faces, where garbage grows in the lanes, and where sorrow and despair are endemic diseases. He was wise in much of the sad lore of back streets and could speak from the pulpit in a language understood of the people. So with angels and archangels and with the glorious company of heaven, and with a few poor folk like myself on earth, we had service in Saint Mary-of-the-Hills. In the fretful world of to-day, with its noise, haste and many amusements, Sunday can still bring healing and great peace.

O day most calm, most bright,  
The week were dark but for thy light.

## CHAPTER IX

### A WAYSIDE BETHEL

I HAD been on a Sussex common whose name is well known in all lands because there was found there some bones of a rude, shambling, beetle-browed creature whom certain wise men say is a forbear of mine. The day was in early spring, cold and dull, with a nasty wind. When evening arrived I found shelter in a cosy inn of an old-fashioned sort, where was a warm fire and a pleasant meal. When the dusk gathered some sons of the soil entered, in fact many of them, and the bar overflowed into my little room. I rather like to mix and mingle with my fellow men, whether high or low, and join in the talk. On this evening, however, they got too noisy and, besides, their words were not all dainty, so I went out for a stroll.

The wind blew from the east and bits of hail struck my face like whip-cords. I can enjoy a walk in 'a nipping, eager air' when the body is warm and the circulation good, but the elements were a bit too vigorous on this night, and I was tired. So it happened that when I reached a little wayside chapel lit up, and saw people by ones and twos going in, I went in. It was only a small week-day service such as many poor dear

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folk, who know nothing of the higher criticism or Mr. Bertrand Russell's cold philosophy, love to frequent for the warmth and comfort of their souls. I am one of that sort, so I went in and sat down. Outside the wind moaned, inside the lamps burned with fitful light, the oil smelt, the seats were bare. Nevertheless, I enjoyed it all, for here was a gathering of ordinary common folk, 'men my brothers, men the workers', and we worshipped God in simplicity. Now I belong to the 'Anglican' persuasion, but I know there are those who love not archaic language and would speak to God in the vernacular of the streets and fields, and express their wants and feelings in a way immediate and personal. The preacher, or leader, was one in early manhood, of the land; his coat was soil-stained, as were also his hands; he was evidently not robust, his face was pinched and sallow, his eyes very bright.

Strange to say there was not much of the Gospel that night. The atmosphere was of the Old Testament or that part of it which belongs to the Hebrew cry against pride and wrong in high places. The hymns were an exception to this. Here at least we had a whiff from the Evangelists. One was that about 'showers of blessings,' well-known and well-beloved; another about 'ninety and nine that safely lay,' and these were sung with vigour and fervour. The lesson he read, however, and the sermon he preached breathed rather of the aspirations of the political platform. He read

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from a dramatic chapter in the last book of the Bible about the fall of Babylon, 'I sit as a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.'

He was a Piers the Plowman in the pulpit. His life I think was a hard one—heavy work, poor health, and perhaps intellectual ambitions unrealizable—and his sermon was a chiding of selfishness and pride among the mighty and against ostentatious spending. Wages were insufficient, food was dear, we were told by the Government to save, yet was it not so? Hotels grew larger in London and more luxurious for the fortunate ones, ocean liners ever bigger and more sumptuous. There was breeding of race-horses, there were the silly-heads who crowded a race-course to see which quadruped got in front of another. Woe unto them who call evil good, black white, and would make that straight which God hath made crooked.

Now perhaps I am putting it somewhat in my own language, but this was the drift of the matter and I thought it a bit tiresome.

Here were simple-hearted folk who had come asking for bread, and the preacher gave them highly peppered toast. And how did Hodge down in this remote spot know so much of the doings in modern Babylon? I suppose he had read and worried over certain penny newspapers that use startling headlines and have a chit-chat column informing him of doings of 'Society'. I liked the man; he had evidently read much of a sort and worried much. Here was an uncultured Liddon,

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a Spurgeon, but without Spurgeon's sprightly wit and homely humour, one rather in the line of John Ball the priest of Kent, or Samuel Rutherford fulminating in the depths of Galloway against princes and prelates. I remembered as I sat in the small bare chapel with its smelly oil lamps and rough vested congregation that, a hundred and more years ago, it was in places like these many of the leaders who shaped the Trades Union movement, started co-operative stores, and fought with dour stubbornness against many evils of industrial changes, received their training, learned to speak, as many did speak, with the eloquence of Bible English and the idealism of prophets and apostles.

It is likely that this chapel which shows its grey face on a remote wayside has a place in the history of seventeenth-century Puritanism. Possibly it took its birth, it looked old enough, after the Five Mile Act of 1665. Many of the meeting-houses which meet us in remote places of the county did so. Sussex was at this time very vigorous in its nonconformity. In Dr. Williams' library in Gordon Square, London—a rich Dissenting foundation, I might explain, but which to-day directs its beneficent activities to all students alike whichever side of the line they belong to—in this library there are early printed books and much MSS. which deal with the troubled years of this period. Whichever side was at the top the quality of mercy was strained. Having told the story of my visit to a little worn-faced Bethel, I am

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minged to go on and give some extracts gathered from the wealth of Dr. Williams' foundation.

In a 'Survey' of the seventeenth century a list and review of clergy 'who followed not them' is drawn up. Here are some of the epithets on those under the searchlight: 'a very lewd fellow'; of another Sussex vicar, 'the best wrastler in the county'—a gentle way of damning him; of other parsons, 'he is a good archer'; 'his conversation is mostly on hounds'. But here is harder speech: 'a good dicer and carder both night and day'; 'an old ruffian'; 'a drunkard, cosiner, and very lewd fellow'; 'as bad as may be'. There is a swearing of the alehouse and stable, also a swearing of the pulpit, and each is bad language. On some the 'Survey' is content to pour scorn: 'no preacher'; 'a verie ridiculous preacher'; 'a caterpillar' (suggestive of those who live only to consume); 'he was a scrivener'; 'he is a pettifogger', and—racial animosity—'a scotta', 'a stranger-born'.

No doubt there were clergy not up to their jobs, some who had mistaken their vocation. To this day you can meet those of the cloth who had better be wearing farmer's breeches, or following some useful occupation like butcher or baker. We can be sorry for them; they have lost their way. But the judgments of the 'Survey' are hard, bitter and unfair. We can imagine them saying, for instance, of some kindly vicar who occasionally took a hand at bowls with his parishioners or threw a quoit on the village green: 'He loveth the playthings of foolish men, puppets, toys and



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trifles, and delighteth more in bowls than in the Word of God.'

'That foule Idoll of the Crosse,' wrote one, 'was not only not removed, but has since been advanced upon the altar of abomination'; 'and there is pyping with organnes, and singing, ringing and trowling of the psalms from one side of the Quiar to another, the squeaking of chaunting queresters disguised in white surplesses, imitating the manner and fashions of Anti-Christ the Pope, that man of Synne and childe of perdition.'

There is a story told by Calamy of the coming to Glynde of an able man and a stalwart for the faith—'Mr. Zachary Smith, vicar and minister of the Word of God.' His first sermon in that church proved, so far as I can make out, his last. His text was St. Luke i. 64, and it is about Zacharias's mouth being opened and his tongue loosed. But the text was not prophetic as concerns Mr. Zachary Smith. A magistrate was present, and he took such alarm at the loosened tongue and freeness of epithets that morning in the pulpit of Glynde, that an official order came some days after for 'silence', and Zachary was—as he sorrowfully expressed it—'struck dumb'. After that he went to Lindfield as curate, 'but was soon outed from thence for no greater crime than not wearing the surplice.' Returning to Glynde, he acted as chaplain to William Morley, Esquire, one of the best types of Puritan gentlemen, and in 1678 died and was interred within the walls of Glynde Church. A few days after, his patron and bene-

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factor died, and the minister, a friend of both, who preached the funeral sermon took for his text words that seemed apposite to the occasion and to the grief felt by parishioners who had an affection for their old silenced vicar, 'I was dumb. I opened not my mouth because thou didst it.'

In 1584 the vicar of Arlington came under episcopal frown because of his freedom in interpreting rubrics to his way of thinking. We hear the same complaint to-day, but it is generally applied to an opposite party. Mr. Turner had to appear before the Archdeacon at Lewes, and was bidden, without further cavil, to subscribe in all sincerity, *simpliciter*, to the formularies of the Prayer Book. But he would do so only with reservations; he would make his choice, for, he said, 'There are many things in that book vainly invented.' So he was suspended and deprived. The vicar of Arlington had to go forth and pitch his tent in the wilderness. 'This may be to certifie that I, Stephen Turner, minister of the church of Arlington, have been suspended from my charge this yere and a quarter for refuseinge simply to subscribe, no other matter beinge objected againste me.'

But the Archdeacon of Lewes had to deal with clergy more dogged than the vicar of Arlington. Of these, with other nonconforming clergy, was Mr. Hely, of the parish of Warbleton. As his name does not appear in Hennesy's list of this parish it is probable that though ministering in the church and parish he had refused episcopal

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ordination. He was a young man and, it would seem, loudly vocal of his views. Being threatened with the fate which had befallen Arlington's vicar, he went up, forming one of a deputation of Sussex clergy—there were the vicars of Dallington, of Amberley, of Salehurst—to Lambeth Palace, where they had 'lardge speache', extending over two days, with His Grace of Canterbury and Mr. Dean of St. Paul's and others at that time in the seats of the mighty.

There is a voluminous report of this extended discussion. The Archbishop seemed sincerely anxious to find some ground of accommodation, but was also impatient, as he expressed it, of the lop-sided views of men who wanted the ministry of the church, while apparently repudiating what was distinctive of its discipline and doctrine. 'You of Sussex,' says the Archbishop, 'have bene accompted very disordered and contentious, and His Majesty hath bene informed of you and I mean to proceed streightely in this pointe.' So they discuss 'points of popery', to wit, the wearing of the surplice, kneeling at Holy Communion, the keeping of Holy Days, reading lessons from the Apocrypha, the Communion in homes of the sick, 'as a remembrance to popish housell'. On the latter office the Archbishop gently points out that the Prayer Book does not compel it, but allows it. By and by, as harangues continued, His Grace got angry. 'You are unlearned and but boyes in comparasion of us, who have studied divinity before you, for the most part, were born.'

## A WAYSIDE BETHEL

After two days of this shuttlecock, the Archbishop said, 'Goe your wayes, and walk in the garden, or consider elsewhere of this matter, and returne againe'. This was a sign that the Archbishop and those with him had reached the end of their patience and time, and the Sussex divines must either submit or be deprived.

They crossed by the ferry to Westminster and considered the matter; the balances were poised, and slowly, with protestations, and with reservations, which the Archbishop allowed, 'to avoid cavillings afterwards', they signed and returned to their parishes to tell to friends and sympathisers of 'the travail that had befallen them by the way'.

I cannot help but think that many of these Puritan stalwarts, though so bleak in their theology, so cold and hard-faced in their outlook, had some sense of humour, a feeling for fun. I have been looking at the titles of some booklets of the Commonwealth period which an antiquarian bookseller has sent me, and though they are, I know, vinegary diatribes, yet there is a touch of nonsensical conceit, a jingle and banter, which betokens a streak of gaiety in the composition; witness these among some others:

'A Spiritual Mustard pot to make the soul sneeze with devotion.'

'Crumbs of comfort for the Chickens of the Covenant.'

'A most Delectable Sweet-perfumed Nosegay for God's Saints to smell at.'

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

‘High-heeled shoes for Dwarfs in Holiness.’

‘Eggs of Charity, Layed by the Chicks of the Covenant and boiled in the waters of Divine Love—Take ye and eat.’

It seems to me that religious controversy was a joyous form of pastime three centuries ago. It is very distasteful with most people of to-day. These are matters of taste and temperament. Now I utterly dislike the jargon of Newmarket, the twaddle about film stars and bickerings over the game of cricket. ‘Other times, other ways.’

## CHAPTER X

### WHERE IS DIDLING?

THERE are some churches in Sussex which are cosily ensconced, and on friendly terms with the passers-by. They are generally close to the highway, with trim, well-kept churchyards, trees whose greenery adds grace to old stonework, and houses are close at hand. But in wanderings through little-known parts of Sussex, and there are such, you can find some which look lonely and forlorn. It is likely in their history they were once more happily conditioned: in the midst of a cheerful hamlet, and the Sunday bell would bring together a responsive flock to join in common prayer and worship, or perhaps close by was a manor house which gave them company and daily intercourse. That is often the case with churches which now look isolated and forsaken; they had their beginning it may be, with a big house, they were cradled with it, but one—in the changes of centuries—has vanished, and the other survives.

Didling is a lonely church. It stands away from the high road at two fields' distance, the background is a steep escarpment of Down; a setting very beautiful, but which adds to a deep quietude which seems to enwrap it. No dwellings

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

are near, and on a winter's afternoon it looked like a mother bereft of children, a Niobe with sad eyes. A friend recently motored me there, for I—who laud the ancient way of travelling with the two companions given to us at our birth, and which further allow one to loiter, to muse, to taste bit by bit the passing scenes—cannot always reach desired places, and Didling dwells for me far off. I was hurried to Didling in a motor car.

We turned into a road which leaves Cocking on its west side and at once we were in a high-banked lane so narrow and so devious in its coursing that, in a drift of thought, I speculated as to what would happen if we met a hay wagon or a farm thresher, or one of the mighty biscuit vans which trundle our highways. Nothing of the kind happened, and in the whole run of four miles from Cocking corner to the turn at Old Treyford we did not meet an opposing vehicle. On the journey from Cocking westward you will see Bepton Church perched a little way off on the right. I am inclined to reckon this also among the little-known fanes of Sussex. Its massive tower and nave of a pleasant chequer stonework give it an appeal, and motorists who pause in their career to visit it will find two objects of special interest: an Easter sepulchre of remarkable size and rich elaboration, and a very early font, possibly Saxon, but which some fatuous stone-mason has re-tooled and made to look a brand-new thing. It is worth adding that the rectory of this church has a link with a philosopher, Herbert Spencer, whom

## WHERE IS DIDLING?

I may call twice dead, for his philosophy has well-nigh evaporated. Here he chose to dwell on two or more summers far from the madding crowd and elaborate his 'synthetic' construction of human thought and consciousness. Carlyle was impatient of Spencer's cold whitelight search into the springs of emotion, 'the most unending ass in Christendom'.

As a building, Didling Church is as plain as a church can be. It is reached by a short rutty lane to the left. Seen from the highway, half hidden by a large yew tree, it might be a cottage with chimney at the gable end. As you get near the chimney becomes a bell-cot, you see porch, small chancel and a churchyard with grey lichened sandstone memorials, for the craze for white marble has not reached Didling; also around the graveyard is a slight fall of ground which may indicate that the church was built, like Old Treyford, on a spot, a tumulus, already hallowed. The walling of the church is of flint, blocks of malm—which is a rock chalk—and the angle stones are the rough brown texture of Quarr quarry in the Isle of Wight. This stone was much used for building purposes in the coastal district of this corner of Sussex in the pre-Norman period. It was almost necessary, in buildings of rubble or flint, for coigns and the making of windows. Later, at the era of Norman influence, Caen stone came into general use; it was creamy white, of close texture and very durable, and soon displaced that from Quarr. Didling Church was much

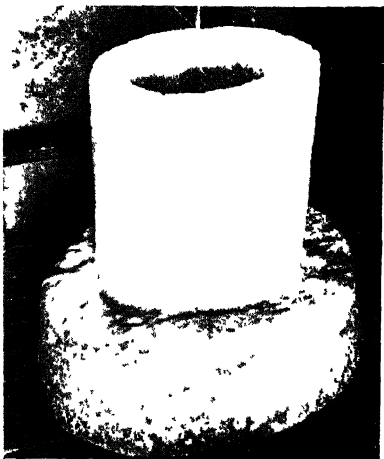


## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

repaired at a later time in brick. Most of the brick, as that at the west end, is of 'English bond', that is, in alternate courses of stretchers and headers which came into use about 1500. A century later a new style, the 'Flemish Bond', became general.

The windows are simple lancets with a deep interior splay. Their age is about 1200 or very soon after, and this might suggest the age of the building except that two considerations give pause: there is the walling just mentioned, also there is a font which must be of quite early date and among the oldest in the county. It is interesting to discover that in this corner of Sussex there is a group of fonts tub-shaped and certainly primitive. The font at Didling is cut out of a solid block of stone, and the surface shows a diagonal pickwork, which was the fashioning tool of Saxon workmen; the chisel did not come into use until the eleventh century. The interior has no sign of lead lining and its cavernous depth could, at the time of baptism, quite engulf a child. Total immersion was the old and general form of receiving the sacrament. 'We are buried with Him in baptism,' says the apostle, and that is the form it took as a picture of death and rising to a new life. This font, which stands with a slight tilt, is on a plinth so rough and age-worn that it may be as old as the burden it bears.

The interior of Didling Church is austere clean: its walls are whitewashed, the brick paving well scrubbed, there is no stained glass, no wall



DIDLING CHURCH

THE TUB FONT  
DIDLING



## WHERE IS DIDLING?

memorials, no hatchments with 'the boast of heraldry, the pomp of power'; the place looked, on the late autumn day when I was there, like the well-rubbed face of a comely village child when, at the beginning of day, he goes to school.

Didling is a word which, according to Professor F. Mawer, indicates a settlement of a Saxon chief with the name of Dyddel, and those grouped around him in the settlement and belonging to him would be called by their neighbours 'The Diddlings'. The name calls up a picture of a place of once eager life and industry, but all has gone except the name.

There are three other features within the church which give glory to it, besides those I have mentioned. One is a portion of a noble Jacobean pulpit; half has gone, for when originally made it would encircle the preacher; also the tester has gone, but what is left is an exquisite example of early seventeenth-century woodwork. So also is the altar rail, which may be of the same age as the pulpit; the top portion, with the unusual line of panelling, suggests a pre-Laudian date. Thirdly—and not of least interest—there are the benches, which cannot be later than fifteenth century. Now most people during mass or the other short medieval services preferred to keep standing; only when the bell tinkled and the host was raised would they fall on their knees in worship. But some, I suppose, chose to sit if seats existed, which was not usually the case. Here at Didling it would be with a minimum of

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

comfort: the seats are narrow and the backs stiffly upright. In a more indulgent age the seats were widened, and the backs made ever so slightly to tilt, and so the austerities of worship in Didling Church were in that respect mitigated.

I noticed in the churchyard—evidently at some time cast out of the church—a sepulchral slab, possibly covering before the altar the remains of a parish priest. It is of brown sandstone with a well-cut Calvary cross in relief. I would suggest to the vicar and wardens that it deserves to be brought back and preserved as a valuable possession.

Didling Church was not always so austere in its interior and so bare in its accessories as it is to-day. There are references in early wills to colour, lights 'perpetually' hanging, and figures of saints to help the child mind of distant years in worship. Says Robert Smythe, farmer, who died 1544, 'I bequeath my body to the churchyard of St. Aundre of Dedlinge,' so the dedication of the church to the fisherman saint is clear. Another will gives an addition: '1532. Joane Goldock, widow,' 'my body to be buried within the church of Didylng, before Our Lady's altar. Item. I bequethe unto the church of Saint Andrew of Didiling,  $\frac{3}{4}$  and a torch.' Probably the Lady altar stood below and on one side of the chancel screen which then, as everywhere, existed in a parish church.

The living of Didling has always been a starving one. At an early date of the Norman

## WHERE IS DIDLING?

settlement its great tithes were given to the Priory of Boxgrove. Who has them now I do not know, but they are not paid to the vicar, or only the small, 'vicarial' payments. So it has come to pass that Didlinge is one of a group of four churches; it is joined up with Old Treyford, New Treyford and Elsted, and these are all under a single-handed parson. One church is in ruins, one is half a ruin, and the two others are quite alive. The one bell of Didling Church has impressed on the metal, 'I.W. 1587.' The initials are those of John Wallis, a bell founder of Salisbury. Alone I believe of all the parishes of Sussex it has no silver Communion vessels. Its chalice and paten are of pewter, of seventeenth-century date.

## CHAPTER XI

### PHILOMELA

SOME years ago I was cycling by the northern suburb of Hastings, a part where new houses were pushing a way towards fields and copses. There were the ring of the bricklayer's trowel and the steady ding of the carpenter's hammer, and much noise was going on. Over these sounds, musical and clear, rose a bird chorus. They were nightingales. It was afternoon and a May sunshine flooded the land, and I have never heard nightingales in such fullness and perfection as I did among the clatter of happy industry.

The nightingale is not at all a shy bird; he has no objection to human kind, even in a crowd if it is not too prying and will respect his mate in the quietude of the nest. I can picture garden cities of the future, and well-spaced village streets, with Philomela's music if only some trees and bushes such as he loves are allowed, and those two especial enemies, boys and cats, kept in abeyance. The nightingale is willing to serenade you under conditions the blackbird and many warblers refuse to entertain.

Why are nightingales so abundant in Kent, so frequent in Sussex and Surrey and, beyond those lines, scarce or non-existent? That is a question



A MALE NIGHTINGALE  
SITTING ON EGGS





## PHILOMELA

I cannot answer, but Gilbert White, who watched closely and thought closely about birds, gave the opinion that it is because they crossed in spring to this country by the Dover Straits, the shortest sea journey, and being weak-winged birds spread outward fan-wise; also, as sensible birds, they settled at the first suitable places they came to; later ones would have to go farther, but to the mind of the nightingale there appeared no reason to go farther than was necessary. So they are abundant in places nearest to the crossing and increasingly few as distance proceeds. I do not know what latter-day ornithologists think, but this seems to be a good explanation.

The ideal haunt of the nightingale is a mixture of wood and scrub. There was, in my old parish, a large stray hawthorn bush not far from a hangar where year after year, and I believe beyond memory, a pair of nightingales had come, a succession of them, and enlivened the village with rare music. Then it ceased, the long succession of musicians stopped. Why? Well, I believe some village boy knows the reason.

The song of the nightingale is not only wonderful in the richness of its tone and range of notes; that does not explain the hold it has had on mankind ever since records of birds began, down to the present. It has a suggestive quality which calls out something from the human soul. The joy and gaiety and blitheness of the world seem here at their highest utterance; but even more so in its deep cadences is all the sorrow of the world—the

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

pain, heartache and questionings, these find expression. Every one who knows and loves the English language in its highest reaches, knows and loves the Ode of Keats, but all through the ages some of the best minds have said the same things of this 'light-winged Dryad of the trees' and his plaintive anthem. Many other birds sing beautifully, and some with rare beauty: the flutings of the blackbird at evening, the low song of the garden warbler, and the buoyant carolling of the lark in the depths of the sky; and of these as of the nightingale there is often 'a sadness in the song.'

But what is beauty? Is it external, something we hear or see, or is it only the reaction of the mind to certain outward impressions, a thing wholly subjective? That is what Coleridge thought:

. . . we receive but what we give,  
And in our life alone does nature live.

But this is a question as old as humanity.

## CHAPTER XII

### HOMES OF ANCIENT ART

How many of those who ramble through Sussex for strange things know that the oldest and, it may be added, the loveliest of 'primitives' existing in England is in the small chapel attached to the palace of the bishops of Chichester? The chapel was built about A.D. 1200, and the painting is the only survival of several placed there by good Bishop Seffrid II. when its walls were first reared. The interest of this painting is twofold. One is its own loveliness. It is the everlasting appeal of a Mother with a Child. The artist has caught the turn of a little child's head, of baby fingers and a mother's bent look. The other thing of interest about this painting is that it shows signs of a breakaway from Byzantine tradition which for many centuries had fettered Christian art, a style of stiff, conventional lines and expressionless faces. In this roundel of more than seven hundred years ago can be seen the earliest touch of a change which a few years later, under Cimabue and Giotto, were to transform the whole movement of Western art. 'This work,' says Professor Tristram, 'must undoubtedly be accounted the purest gem of English medieval painting in existence, so exquisite is it in the tender lyrical

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

feeling which governs the whole conception and is communicated no less by the character of line and movement than by the expression of the heads and the incomparable delicacy of the scheme of colour.'

English art in music, painting, metal-work, coloured glass, sculpture and all manner of graven work centres in its churches. There are several reasons. There was, first and greatest, the waves of real piety which swept men's minds through centuries which seem to us as we look back broken with constant war, recurring plagues and much suffering. They were offerings for the honour of God and for the glory, greatness and beauty of high worship. In the churches there dwelt peace. Another undoubted reason was that these buildings, whether great fanes like those at Chichester, Battle, Rye and Boxgrove, or little ones of the Downs and clearings of the Weald, stood for permanence. When you look at Worth Church at the northern edge of the county, or Clayton ensconced at the foot of the Downs, or Bosham, which looks out on the Chichester waters, or Selham, or Arlington, or Ford, you see buildings whose worshippers probably took part in the battle of Hastings or heard the mighty news as fugitives ran by that England had fallen and another people possessed the land. A great many Sussex churches have come down to us from Norman and pre-Norman days with little alteration of line and feature. It is no wonder that those who craved to do something that should endure among

## HOMES OF ANCIENT ART

the changes and chances of human history chose the parish church for the purpose, and that it is there we find visible signs of the long story of the past.

There is a very small church built on the edge of the Arun marshes which shows on its wall some of the earliest mural paintings in England. It is St. Botolph's of Hardham. In this tiny edifice are pictures which are as early as the end of the eleventh century and beginning of the next, and they tell us with rude vigour and with fullness what were the thoughts of common people on matters which everlastingly perplex the mind, the soul, God and the future. The walls of Hardham Church are a mirror of the thought of that time. The story of the Fall and Redemption takes up much of the space of the chancel wall. In the scene of Eden, Eve toys with an apple and talks persuasively to Adam; the serpent, ugly in form but with the face of a comely, alert-looking dog, looks on. Then follow pictures of the Nativity, a subject which seems of unending interest in all ages to Christian folk. Gabriel, radiant in brown, white, yellow and green, gives his message. Shepherds arrive from the hills, magi offer their gifts—they look curiously like Norman knights in steel caps and white surcoats. There is the Flight into Egypt, the Massacre of the Innocents, and, in the central place of the chancel arch, the Adoration of God and the Lamb. Here angels bow and swing their censers, and there is a touch of the joyful notes of the *Te Deum*. On the west

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

wall are the torments of the damned. On a portion of the north wall are a series of pictures of unusual interest. They are scenes in the life of St. George of Cappadocia, and one of them shows his intervention on behalf of the Crusaders at the battle of Antioch. The return from the first Crusade was about A.D. 1097 and the picture must be the earliest of its kind. The story of St. George's presence and help in that struggle spread quickly throughout the land and led to the displacement of Edward the Confessor as the national saint of England.

Much of the mural painting in this church is indistinct, broken by time, damp, neglect and injudicious scraping. The colours have grown faint and some of the scenes are piecemeal.

Hardham Church is one of a notable series of Sussex churches which include Clayton, Plumptre, Westmeston, Patcham, Preston and Trotton. Some of the paintings in these places may be due to the influence of the Cluniac priory of Lewes and the Norman family of de Warenne who were the prior's great patrons. The house of Lewes was in close touch with a notable artistic movement on the Continent. Some of the monks may have been Burgundian artists. Certainly the early work done in the churches of their possession have a character French and Byzantine rather than English.

There is a church in Sussex with a remarkable set of wall paintings which show another tendency and set of ideas from those we have described.

## HOMES OF ANCIENT ART

They are in the remote village of West Chiltington. Most of them are of the thirteenth century but some belong to the fourteenth when, following the Black Death, new thoughts were awake. There are several pictures of interest, but one is of a class which shows, apparently, the influence of the poem *Piers the Plowman*, which towards the end of the century took great hold of the labouring people and had political consequences.

It is on a splay of a north window, the one near the pulpit, and represents Our Lord as a labouring man, as the carpenter of Nazareth. He stands full-sized with a wagon at His feet, and instead of the luminous halo painters usually make there is around head and body the implements of His calling: hammer, chisel, square knife, adze, saw and plane. The body and hands are marked with stains and bruises. It is a piece of folk-expression, original and widely different in artistic manner and way of thought from other paintings. Stedham Church had a similar figure of Christ as a labourer, but at a 'restoration' it was wilfully destroyed. It is difficult to understand the mentality of some architects, parsons and lay church-people in mid-Victorian years. The work in West Chiltington belongs to the time of the 'Peasants' Rising', when bands of disaffected men, led by a priest, John Ball, marched through the country lanes of Kent, Sussex and Surrey chanting the refrain:

When Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then the gentleman?



## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

There is a full and interesting account of this painting in the well-known work of Borenius and Tristram, *English Medieval Painting*, and an excellent reproduction made at a time when it emerged from the whitewash of many centuries and its colours were fresh and bright. It seems to me, though it is a hard thing to say, a misfortune when these interesting things are discovered and exposed to light and full view. Probably when first made they had a protective glaze of which the workman to-day has lost knowledge, and until more is known about their preservation they had better stay in retirement.

There are wayside churches which have bits in them seemingly done by happy-hearted craftsmen who saw their subjects with eyes of wonder, reverence, humour and whimsicality. In Cocking Church, which stands near the road from Chichester to Midhurst, is a curious and delightful piece of work which Mr. P. M. Johnston, when restoring the building in 1899, brought to light, and he puts the date at about 1225. It is on the splay of a Norman window high up in the nave, and is a scene, probably one of several which once existed, of the Nativity. Shepherds have come from the hills drawn by a star and beckoned by an angel. Now this is quite a scripture variant; there the star belongs only to the magi. There are two shepherds—a tall, bearded man and a boy—but a third is hinted at by a splash of red behind, as though of a cloak. They are hooded against the cold and wear gloves of a kind shepherds favour

## HOMES OF ANCIENT ART

to-day which cover the fingers and give a place for the thumb. They carry crooks of bent stick, the kind that could be cut out of a hedge. The first shepherd has his hand over his eyes to shield them from the bright light of the star and luminous clouds; his boy follows with hand up in surprise, while a sheep-dog stands on hind legs with mouth open in dumb amazement. The colours are still bright and the picture is one of quaintness and charm.

Clymping had a quite unusual picture on its west end wall of animals going into the Ark. These were destroyed in a disastrous restoration of 1870. If only they had been preserved we might have had a study of the queer kinds of beasts the medieval mind supposed the world, its unknown parts, to be inhabited with.

As a rule the scene portrayed over the chancel arch, the place most prominent in the public gaze, was the 'Doom', and artists seemed to linger lovingly and with riotous fancy over the fate of the damned. Devils of several varieties looked down upon the congregation, and there were boiling-pots, pitchforks, and wide-jawed monsters as hints to the heedless and wilful. There is, however, a pleasant exception to this over the chancel arch of Patcham Church. It deals in an altogether charming way with the blessed departed ones on their way to heaven. Here are kings and bishops wearing crowns and mitres, but mixed up with a happy crowd of common people, and all are journeying to the

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

golden gates and angels are there to welcome them. The date of it is soon after 1200, and all the time since these happy ones have been beckoning to unnumbered congregations below to come after them. I would, however, accuse the vicars of this church and certain rich donors of wilfully hindering and staying this celestial message, for so much heavily stained glass has in recent years been placed in the windows that the blessed ones now dwell aloft in perpetual twilight.

It must be said, however, that the medieval gazers preferred, if we may judge from the frequency, devils to angels, and rather loved objects which were horrible. The same might be said to-day of subjects chosen for cinema films and the way crowds rush to the scene of an accident. There is a wide field of study of the medieval devil for ramblers about Sussex who are disposed that way. Trotton has a gruesome assortment, and some will be found at Ford, Wisboro', Preston and other places varying in guise from smiling angels to wriggling reptiles.

Sussex was particularly rich among the counties of England in medieval wall paintings and their subjects covered a large ground. They were chiefly concerned with the central events in the life of Our Lord, His Birth, Passion and Resurrection, but other scenes of His life were portrayed, and one parable at least seemed to be of especial interest to working people, that of Dives and Lazarus. 'Socialism' is an old growth. Of saints the warriors St. George, St. Martin and the

## HOMES OF ANCIENT ART

Archangel Michael were in favour, and in nearly every church St. Christopher was shown opposite the entrance door as a last and comforting glimpse for wayfarers.

The most considerable survivals of this primitive work of devotion seem now to be in the western half of the county; the eastern must have had its share, but this portion has not so well endured the onslaughts of Puritan wreckers and, what has been far more disastrous, the restoring zeal of recent years. I suppose in these highly refined days some susceptible worshippers object to the sight of demons, angels, monsters and figures most of whom are not becomingly covered.

The wall paintings of eastern Sussex were many but are now few. Battle had a large series: scenes of the Passion, the Contest of Good and Evil, the Three Kings. These have not been allowed to continue, and the same can be said of those, of which only reports have come down, at Rye, Salehurst, Udimore, Westmeston and Plumpton. At the little-known churches of Hamsey, Hooe and Botolph's are some still mercifully dwelling under coats of whitewash. Icklesham has, or had, some pictures. At Horsham are large panels over the tower arch which have been repainted with variations, so they are both very old and very new. Rotherfield has an interesting group, and there are smaller pieces at Findon and Slaugham; all are fair things but are slowly fading away. Arlington, a church, small, remote, but perhaps more than any building in

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Sussex crowded with historical interest, here some have been recently found and are now emerging into daylight. Ruskin has said that it is only happy-hearted people who love bright colours. If judged by this the medieval worshippers must have been joyous folk, for the churches, certainly those of this county, were ablaze with colour, and, week-day as well as Sunday, had a touch of life which the glow of lighted lamps and tapers can give.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PEVENSEY HIGH STREET

PEVENSEY High Street, except for the noisy passage of motor cars during summer time, is a sleepy place. It was once dignified with the title of town, a borough and a port to boot; it is to-day no more than a dwindled village. At the head of its only surviving street are the mighty walls of Anderida, at the other end is the bridge, an old one, but so much rebuilt and refashioned that it has lost all sign of birth and beginning. Between these two is the street composed of cottages, some very old and some very new. At the top is the 'Mint' house, a quite modern name, let me say, though I believe money is now being made there. It is the most interesting and historical building in the parish, that is, after the castle, to which it is the merest mushroom. It has a jutting sill beam and the upper story is of upright posts, though this is concealed by hung tiles. Inside there is some splendid wainscoting with Tudor carving, and rooms with coloured stencil decoration. It is not the oldest house of the district, that next to the churchyard gate of Westham precedes it by more than a hundred years. The 'Mint' house was built in 1542 by a yeoman marsh farmer, who also had made money by the letting of small

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docks in Salt Haven. Later it was the home of Riding Officers, whose duty it was to patrol the coast and arrest smugglers. Pryor Bredon was one, and there were others: men of big build and lusty carriage well arrayed with large pistols and other useful accessories for their vigils along the lonely coast-line. Later the place was used as the Custom House, and here the last dues and harbour charges were entered of a dying port.

Half-way down on the left is Barham's cottage, which was probably the last home of the Milwards, that is, as Pevensey residents. It is a name linked with the medieval history of the town for hundreds of years. There were Milwards who went out with other Pevensey men to the battle of Agincourt, and descendants of the name and family still linger in Hastings. On the opposite side of the road is a nobly built stone cottage with mullioned windows and Tudor doorway. It must possess history, but I do not know what it is. The name of a recent owner who wishes to be remembered in Pevensey for all ages is cut deeply in the old stonework of the doorway.

Between this and the top of High Street is a building which I hesitate to describe as a habitation. It is the court-house and prison-house of the defunct corporation. It is said to be the smallest 'Town Hall' in England. The overhanging oriel window gave light to a tiny space where on occasion members of a jury jammed themselves together to consider their verdict. Beyond is a miniature magistrates' bench with a prisoner's



THE COURT HOUSE  
PEVENSEY





## PEVENSEY HIGH STREET

dock facing it, and an open box, of a square yard dimension, to serve for witnesses. Below, on the ground floor, behind the nail-studded door are two prison cells each with plank bed, a small window and strongly built walls so that the temporary inhabitants could dwell securely. I have heard that the last of Pevensey folk to be incarcerated was Betty Breach, whom I well remember in her latter days. She was as dainty an old woman as ever tripped along the High Street. It all happened because of Billy Breach, her husband, a good workman, a famous cricketer on the village pitch, but troubled with a frequent thirst.

It seems, from the account I heard from Stephen Boniface—a splendid old man, let me say, farmer, churchwarden and overseer, who left many years ago his mortal remains in the churchyard—that Billy on this occasion had lingered too long for his good at the bar of the New Inn, an hostelry which, in spite of its name, is very old. Betty entered and showed her opinion of the landlord by throwing what was left in Billy's glass over his face and then breaking the tumbler under her feet. For this high offence she was locked up by a foolish magistrate who witnessed the deed. He was, I believe, half soaked at the time himself. But public opinion, that mightiest of forces, was all for Betty. The women on the doorsteps who knew the ways of weak husbands cried shame on the unhappy constable as he passed. So it came about that the magistrate sent

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word that the door was to be opened and Betty released. But Betty would not have her freedom like that; her feelings were outraged, and she was disrespectful: 'I be put here by a numskull magistrate and I bide here till he comes himself and fetches me out.' She won the day: with apologies she was begged to consider herself free of prison and of all aspersion. So the last prisoner of Pevensey jail left in triumph.

It is interesting to linger over Billy and Betty Breach, though I fear I am leaving aside weightier matters. Stephen Boniface told me that on a certain Christmas Day when he had duly attended church, joined in jubilant hymns and listened to the cheerful discourse of Archdeacon Sutton—who was then vicar—he was returning home with good thoughts in his mind when he heard unseemly noises and high wrangling. As he passed Breach's cottage there was a loud impact on a window-pane, and through it, splintering the glass, there came a plum pudding, and it fell, broken and squashed, on the road outside. I am sorry to say that Billy had—this was earlier than the jail incident—visited the inn and come back as Betty expressed it 'possessed of the devil', and this was a result.

But I must not end my account of the homely couple on a note like this. I knew them well in later years, and a better pair of old folks, patient with each other and affectionate, it would be hard to find. Even doves fall out sometimes. They lived then in a tiny cottage close to the

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eastern gate of the castle and eked out existence on a small parish pay. Billy would sit on a stone below the castle gate stairs in the hope that a visitor would ask him a question about the great fabric and he would say what he knew, which was precious little, and perhaps receive a coin. They knew what poverty meant. They went regularly to bed on winter nights before six for warmth and to save firing and candle-light. Think of it, you who consider central heating, electric lighting and a tickling evening repast as among the necessities of life.

The story of Pevensey court-house is linked both with the defunct corporation and the ancient port. They may be said to have died together. From Saxon days Pevensey was a member of the Cinque Ports and its harbour was of consequence. In 1046 we read of forty-two ships riding at anchor within its estuary, when Earl Godwin paid an unwelcome visit to the town. At high water there is reason to know that shallow boats of those days would reach the north side of the great walls of Anderida. This was and still is the lowest part of the Pevensey Levels, and we can think of this and the shore-line of inland water as the place where on that fateful day, the Eve of St. Michael and All Angels, 1066, Duke William brought his boats, 600 sail, and landed men and horses as pictured in the Bayeux Tapestry.

Two causes brought about the failure of Pevensey as a port. One was the silting up of the Haven mouth by the 'eastward drift' of gravel from the

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Channel bed. As you walk down the road by the Haven side to what was once known as 'Walls-end', a name which described the great wall which protected the marshlands but is now called the 'Bay', you can still see the ancient bed of the harbour outlet going straight to the shore, and there is indicated the bend of the stream, which was also the Ashburn stream, more and more to the east until it met the sea at Northeye, two miles away.

The other cause of the loss of the harbour was the gradual 'inching' of the marsh. This, while it won from the sea some of the richest pasture-land in the county, deprived the long inlet of the full scour it needed at the ebb of the waters.

A glimpse of some of the glories of the lost corporation can be seen in a case within the parish church of St. Nicholas. There is mace, seals, the gorgeous gown and cocked hat of the Bailiff, those of the Jurats, their Beadle and Chamberlain, with other insignia of office. The entrance for ships to the Haven became impossible after 1732 when the last vessel passed out, but the corporation was long a-dying. Its termination came under the Act of Sir Charles Dilke, in 1886.

There are several records about the Pevensey prison-house. For two centuries Pevensey people were deeply interested in smuggling, so much so that a vigorous writer called the place 'a nest of robbers'. Among the papers of the Privy Council for the year 1578, there is a story revealed in a letter from Lord Cobham of some pirates who,

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after capture, had been handed over to the Bailiff of Pevensey to be kept in the prison there until trial, but in a mysterious way which roused the suspicion of the Court the pirates escaped. So the bailiff was arrested and put in ward, and had to answer an indictment as to how far wilfully, wittingly, or by neglect of duties the pirates had escaped.

Here is another item partly of business, partly of gossip, in the State Papers of 1656. It is a report of Adam Smythson, a ship's captain, then delayed at Pevensey Port. He 'asks a convoy for his ship, also with four hoys with timber and for two barks, one of which is laden with iron. Could not sail before, the wind being easterly. There is an old woman living at Pevensey who prophesied they would not get out for three months. She is accounted as very evil-tongued, and, by report, has done great deal of harm both to the people and their cattle, etc.'

The bridge which now spans the Haven has a date-tablet giving the year 1589, but this can indicate only a replacement or rebuilding. Up to 1300 there was but a ferry. In that year, or a little later, permission was given for the erection of a bridge. In 1396 the Haven was cut as we see it is now, that is, as a channel going direct to the shore instead of a wide estuary navigable only at high water. Across the bridge on the left side is a small bit of ground where, in the far-off days when the long-bow was a chief weapon in battle history of our country, the youth of the town had to

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resort on Sunday afternoons to practise archery. It preserves the tradition of this in the name of 'the Butts'.

At Pevensey bridge on three sides are wide distances of lands slowly and hardly won from the ebb and flow of the sea. It is an expanse less known perhaps to the ordinary Rambler than any other part of Sussex. One reason is that it is so pieced, parcelled and criss-crossed by ditches, strows, guts and dykes as to be impassable except by the very wary. It is a land of pure delight to the field naturalist, for in its solitudes are rushes, mosses and plants of kinds rarely to be found elsewhere; here the water violet, *Hottonia palustris*, flourishes in early summer, the flowering rush and the insectivorous plant, *Utricularia vulgaris*, with its gay yellow flowers. Birds lurk about; those which love marsh lands, and some which are lonely sojourners after long flight overseas and resting awhile. I have seen that jewelled bird, the kingfisher; the hooded crow, tarrying on his migrational journeys; and, but once only, heard the deep booming of the bittern. These levels have, also, a strong human appeal. A thousand years ago you would look out at high water on a series of small islands just above the wash of the waves, and at low water on a dreary expanse of oozing mud. Slowly what are now green lands have been wrested from the sea, but the name of each eminence with its cottage farm and few trees remains, telling us that they are but eyots. There is Chilley, Manxey, Horsey, Rickney and other 'eyes'.

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Pevensey Haven is now only a deserted stretch of water feeling but faintly the pulse of the sea, no locks, no docks, no quayside; only its name recalls its past.

I have touched but lightly on the background of history belonging to Pevensey High Street. There is 'New' Inn which is a very old inn, and opposite, Lyons Close, mentioned in a Commonwealth Survey. The ancient hostelry, The King's Head, famous in smuggling, beach-combing and furtive episodes, has passed. The Royal Oak is an inn later in date, and encroaches on what was a considerable 'Town Green'. At the fore end of the green under the tree were the town stocks and whipping-post, at the far end stood a nobly timbered mansion of Tudor date known as Caldecotts. It was the home of the Wheatley family, one of whom, of Elizabethan times, has a canopied memorial within the parish church and well-wrought effigy.

The quiet of a long evening has now come to Pevensey, and many of its folk seem to live by providing teas for tourists and telling stories of what never happened, as though the wonderful past of castle, port and town were not enough. I suppose the wandering tourist has a taste for the fanciful, uncanny and queer, and supply will always try to meet demand.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE COUNTRY OF RICHARD COBDEN

MOST roads, when you get intimate with them, seem to possess personality and character. These are not those which the road surveyor has taken seriously in hand for the especial benefit of motorists, but uncorrected trackways which have grown to what they are from the wandering, meandering feet of travellers of uncounted ages; roads which wriggle, though it may be ever so slightly, and give you new glimpses and surprise views as you pass along. I will digress to say that recently I found myself on a road beyond Ditchling which crosses the common. It had been dealt with by the local authority and at much expense to the rates straightened, widened, concreted, kerbed; it was, I suppose, a motorists' joy, but the effect on my mind was depressing. It was too hard, rigid, precise; it looked soulless and much like the military roads one sees in France, brutally undeviating.

The road which goes north from Chichester is as yet unspoiled; it has a soul, it moves with curvatures through much fair scenery, and as you travel you face at one time and unexpectedly the northern escarpment of the Downs with goffered hollows and hanging woods, and at

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another you are looking at the pine-clad hills which mount up to Hindhead. All the villages you pass were old when Domesday Book was compiled. West Dean, Singleton and Cocking have Saxon beginnings. Now here is a bit of information not all my readers know. The tower of Singleton Church has a room where in Saxon and perhaps later days the parish priest lived. You can see high up within the church his window or aperture, his look-out on the church and altar. Singleton also has a link with the great church of Chichester. Hilary, who was bishop in the twelfth century, laid hands on the emoluments, or part of them, of the parish priest of Singleton and bestowed them on the dean and chapter of his cathedral for the purpose of providing a daily portion of bread and beer for their sustenance. I do not know why he was so affectionately disposed towards dean and chapter, for he was a most contentious prelate and never long free of a quarrel. That was 800 years ago and the payment is still made, but whether in its original form I cannot say.

Farther on, beyond Cocking, though field and farm and cottage look much as they did in Tudor days, you are, in one respect, in touch with the stormy times of the early and middle nineteenth century, for this is the Cobden country. You are reminded of it by a pleasant-looking hostelry which stands a little back from the road on the left calling itself 'The Cobden Arms,' and displaying on a swinging sign the face and

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features, well painted, of the famous apostle of free trade. Richard Cobden's life began in a small timbered farm-house at Dunford, a wooded dell a mile away on the right, and there he spent the last fifteen years of his life, but between lie eventful years of storm, conflict and often tumult. This quiet land of farm and cottage and field saw the beginning and ending of one who has influenced deeply the political and international streams of thought of the nineteenth century and still influences it.

The Cobdens are an old family and as distinctively Sussex as any you could find. All through, until these latter days, the family has been a succession of yeomen: men who tilled and toiled and won substance and respect. They seem to have got their name from Copden, a small holding in Sullington. One Godfrey de Copden in 1278 stood surety for his lord, Sir Roger Covert, in that year. From that time the descent is fairly clear. There are Coppdens or Coppedenes at Lancing, Durrington, Slindon, and finally at Midhurst and Heyshott. How long Richard's father, William, had lived at the picturesque, half-timbered farm at the ford of a swift-flowing stream which runs to the Rother I do not know, or whether William inherited it or came to it from Midhurst. Here Richard, the second of eleven children, saw the light on the 3rd of June 1804. He owed much to his mother both in what she gave him in mind and disposition and to her after guidance. How many mothers are transmuted in

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the bright glory of their sons! She was Richard's guiding star. Contrary to what one would expect, mothers of large families are not less potent in influence with their children than those with only one or with two.

It is not my purpose to say anything of the great years when Richard Cobden stood out as the leading opponent of Palmerston in a domineering foreign policy, and who pleaded that we should let Providence have some share in settling world affairs and confine ourselves more to the sore needs of our country. His advocacy of free trade was not at the beginning of his activities, nor was it his main concern, though to-day many people think so. His chief anxiety was for peace among nations and he saw in the tariff walls a chief cause of international bitterness, bickering and ill-feeling. For seven years he led the way and fought through the battle of the Corn Laws. Farm-houses were growing into mansions during the years of the corn tax, and farm workers were in a pitiable condition. As a country parson of more than forty years I happen to know something of this from the labourer's point of view. I have listened to tales which were hardly believable and yet they were true. Think of it: wages nine or ten shillings a week, and, at the same time, bread was one and threepence a quartern loaf, an ounce of tea sixpence, and sugar eightpence a pound. I have talked with old men who recounted the terrible years of the 'Hungry Forties' and those which followed the Crimean

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War, when they tried to satisfy their empty stomachs with swede turnips out of the field, and spent half the night trying to snare a rabbit against the law of the land; when what bread they could get was the damp remains of the corn bin, because it was a bit cheaper, and a sheep's head for sixpence for Sunday dinner a high luxury. We have forgotten these annals of the poor in the easier days we have reached, but I know how deeply and how bitterly the old men remembered them. The iron had entered into their souls.

Richard went to the Grammar School of Midhurst, a school which has trained for England many a bright lad. Two subjects greatly interested him at school: geography and foreign languages. He was ambitious and his mother spurred him on. He was more interested in the place and relativity of Chicago with its population of hundreds of thousands than of the stream Illissuss of classical fable, which has scarcely enough water when dammed for Athenian women to wash their linen in. 'Why', he asked, at a later time in life, 'should not these young gentlemen who know all about the geography of the Illissuss know also something about the geography of the Mississippi?' He found it no more easy to acquire a full knowledge of German and French than do most country lads, but he stuck at it until he had working and colloquial acquaintance, and this knowledge became one of the means of his after success in life. He was employed when he left the fields of Hey-

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shott as foreign commercial traveller for a London firm of linen printers. In his travels he discovered exactly what his customers wanted and not what his employers chose to supply. Later he commenced a business of his own with some monetary help. Richard Cobden & Co., of Clitheroe, sent out a new and arresting type of linen and calico prints—the thing which most folk wanted at home and abroad—and which jumped into success. His income for many years was over £7,000 per annum.

His political ventures were also sane and well thought out. He was an idealist, but not a visionary. I must not enter into a controversial and complicated subject, but I would say this, that though his name is associated with the subject of free trade, yet it was never a one-sided free trade, but international. He did not push the theory to the extremes many of his disciples afterwards went. He believed in having something to barter with. Also his great passion was not this, but peace in the world and goodwill. He stood out against the Crimean War, and foresaw the miseries it brought, and its utter futility. I believe most people would entirely agree with his view of its ineptitude to-day, but in his own time he was pointed at as 'pro-Russian' and as one destitute of proper patriotism. His speeches through the tumult of many years are remarkably free from emotionalism, invective, or strong statement. They are like those of his great friend and fellow helper, John Bright, 'eloquence unadorned',

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simple, direct, but withal sympathetic and persuasive.

He came back to Dunford at the end, battle-worn, but with honours thick upon him. Seventy-five thousand pounds was raised for him as a personal gift, and the Queen offered him a baronetcy which he declined; he preferred to remain plain Richard Cobden. The old home—small, picturesque and insanitary—he entirely rebuilt, and here from time to time he entertained many of those who now look like giants of the past: Gladstone, Bright, Low, Peel and others. Palmerston offered him a place in his last Ministry, but he would have no truck with a policy which he thought was provocative of racial animosities and wars. The cause of peace was a passion with him. His last act, when ill at Dunford, and against the doctor's orders, was to travel up to London with the intention of speaking against a measure then before Parliament which proposed to fortify the Canadian frontier against the United States. On reaching his lodgings in Pall Mall he was too ill to proceed to the House of Commons. He died ten days later. The Bill though urged by a strong militant party failed to pass, and this was largely due to his long and determined advocacy of disarmament as an aid to peace. So because of this, the last episode of his strenuous life, the long frontier between Canada and the United States remains an open one without forts and guns.

Dunford House to-day is almost as Richard



RICHARD COBDEN

FROM THE PORTRAIT BY LOWES DICKINSON





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Cobden left it. I believe it is run as a rest-house for tired people, and I cannot think of any place more suited for such a purpose. Great spurs of the Downs come close to it; there is the distant prospect of the Hampshire hills, and it has lawns, yew trees and pleasant flowering shrubs. Behind all the great social changes Cobden had worked for there was in his temperament something of the aristocrat and the conservative. He was of an old Sussex stock and truly belonged to this land.

The present furnishings of Dunford make it a sort of museum of stirring days that are past. There is a crayon drawing of the statesman by Lowes Dickenson—beautifully done—and a marble bust by Woolner. Portraits of political warriors are abundant: John Bright, Daniel O'Connor, Abraham Lincoln and John Brown, whose soul was a great one and 'goes marching on.' What especially interested me was a drawing in pencil by Maclure Hamilton of W. E. Gladstone in his old age. He is seated in a chair holding a book, and every line of the pencil expresses something of the compelling personality of a great man.

Close by and adjoining the grounds of Dunford is a small but altogether charming house with an open veranda looking on to a trim lawn, a few trees, and a background of high hedges. It is Oatscroft, the home of Mrs. Fisher Unwin, wife of the well-known erstwhile publisher, and last of the family of Richard Cobden. Mrs. Fisher

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Unwin has done much out of loving regard for her father to keep up Dunford to its present state of beauty and peacefulness, and make it what it is—a place of pilgrimage for visitors from many parts of the world. I have a grateful regard for Mrs. Fisher Unwin and her husband. They are lovers of the old, fair, gracious things of Sussex and have done their best against the army of spoliators. We have had much correspondence together about the plight of Old Treyford Church, one of the pleasant little fanes of Sussex, but now left desolate, open to wind and rain and to rank herbage. Men pass by it as a creature forsaken. How I wish I were a millionaire! Also the Fisher Unwins are of the fraternity of St. Francis. As I sat there on a fair summer's day I heard the notes of several warblers and saw rabbits gambolling on the lawn. A red squirrel climbed a pine tree and winked at me. Birds and beasts, our brothers and sisters who live in the fields and woods, are welcome here and they know it. Dunford and Oatscroft form a sort of sanctuary. These children of the wild soon learn to know where they are welcome and perfectly safe.

## CHAPTER XV

### PENHURST AND ELSEWHERE

ON a hot day of June I set out with my friend Ray to find Penhurst Church. Now Penhurst Church lies far from any direct trackway; no one goes there who is in haste to get anywhere else. The road we took moved with no apparent sense of direction; it turned to the right hand and then to the left; also it had steep saddleback hills and a bumpy surface, but it brought views of what to me was an unknown Sussex: hills and woodlands and ancient homesteads, with no sign of the speculative builder or the intrusive bungalow. It is a comfort to find that there are still portions of this fair county retaining its primitive beauty.

Penhurst Church belongs to the Sussex highlands. It stands on a hill which is a watershed and a divide of two important streams, the Rother and the Ashburn. These run below to the north and to the south, and their waters are red with rich iron ore which forms their beds. One wonders why certain churches came to be built, for they stand—some of them—remote, lonely, and with no sign that they ever nursed and nourished a flock. Hooe is like that on a windswept plateau; its village is two miles away; Didling rears itself among fields with a single cottage by it, like a

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hen with one chick. Some good reason existed in each case, though signs of it have passed. Hooe was probably, in part, a landmark for those who passed along the waters of the Channel, or traversed the treacherous trackways of the marshes below. Didling, as its name suggests, served at its beginning a Saxon thane and his people, who have left no marks of their coming and going. There is a story somewhere. Penhurst is a forest church; it stands on what must have been an early clearing, and even to-day, after ages of tree-wastage, there are on all sides and for many miles a vast amount of green woodland. Except for a small and delightfully built manor farm and a single thatched cottage, which probably was a parsonage in days when Penhurst had a rector all to itself—it is now an appanage of Ashburnham—the church stands with no sign even of a hamlet about it. All these lands, however, as far as the eye can travel, and that is over considerable distances, are the home of the iron industry. Ore was being dug from days of the Roman settlement and possibly also furnaces were erected at the stream side to purge the metal for carriage to Pevensey Harbour. Although there are no tokens that a village ever clustered around the church, yet deep in the forest were homes of those who delved the soil and fed the furnaces, and this church would serve, for miners and furnacemen, as medieval churches commonly did, as a spiritual and social centre.

The forge of Ashburnham, which came later

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and stood a mile or more south of the furnace, brought great wealth to the family of that name as well as to humbler folk of the district. The iron which was dug around Penhurst was of high quality in strength and toughness, and the forge of Ashburnham turned out more than twice as much wrought iron as any other in Sussex. This may account for a noble church on the hill of Penhurst rich in stonework and woodwork. Churches were not infrequently built in far-off days as a thanksgiving and a permanent expression of *laus Deo*. The Ashburnham family held furnace and forge for many centuries and this helped them to reach rank and importance. Yet, if I may digress for a while, there are in the story of every great family those who gather and those who scatter. Sir John Ashburnham at the beginning of the sixteenth century was one of the latter. During a short life he had a good time of it and left his successors so empty and bare that they had to sell furnace and forge, and these were alienated for many years—some seventy—until wealth came with marriage and they bought back again what had been as a gold mine to the family.

Penhurst Church belongs to the last wave of Gothic architecture; it is entirely, except for the eastern end of the north side, in early Perpendicular style, and was built as we see it now about 1440-1460. My friend Ray, who knows far more than I do about things of long ago, and who I dare say is known to many of my readers by his luminous book on the suppression of the Chantries,

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pointed out to me the signs, faint but distinct, of an older church. Many of its stones had been utilized in the present one. But the builders of the fifteenth century made a clean sweep of the earlier erection. All round the outside walls you can see a boldly projecting plinth with the moulding of the later period, so that from top to bottom it was a re-building. One bit, however, was never finished. The tower with a turret stairway, as the reader will see from the snapshot, barely rises above the roof-ridge and the tip of a noble west window on the other side. It is but half grown up and fitted with a wooden cap to house temporarily the bells. It happens that the temporary cover of five centuries ago still does duty.

Besides the features of the exterior I have mentioned, the west window of the tower and the heavy plinth around the walling, there is a porch with spandrelled doorway at the west and a south porch with much weathered barge-boarding. The buttresses stand oblique, a feature of the Perpendicular period, when masons discovered how to make one buttress do the work of two; there is a priest's door in the chancel and two 'scratch' diales are on the south-west buttress of the nave. I found, in the full sunlight of a June day, that a pencil inserted in the socket where the gnomon had stood threw a shadow of noon true to solar time. The only piece of later work in this church is shown in the photograph, the second window with square hood moulding and feathered head tracery, also with stones larger than those of the



PENHURST CHURCH





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rest of the church and fully squared. It is, I suppose, a chapel, if we may use such a term of the post-chantry period, and of the same date as the manor farm just beyond the churchyard wall: that is, late sixteenth century or early seventeenth.

There are several points of interest inside: old oaken pews, some wainscoting, a squint in the chancel wall, bits of old glass in the windows, with the Pelham pelicans, a carved Jacobean oak pulpit with reading desk, all that is left of a three-decker. What most appealed to me were the chancel screen and the great tie beam above it. The chancel screen is clearly a survival of the earlier and destroyed church. The tracery is decorated and it has evidently been cut and diminished to make it fit a narrower way. On the top beam of the screen is a deep groove suggesting that once an oaken tympanum existed and filled the space in the former church between it and the chancel arch. This provided space for paintings of the Doom or other soul-arousing subjects.

Last, but to me not of least interest, is the tie beam and king-post above the screen. Here is still the hook on which the Holy Rood, the figure of the dying Saviour, hung, and underneath, cut into the beam, are the words 'Ecce Homo'. All medieval churches had their roods; they were intended to catch the eye of every worshipper as he or she entered the church, but this is the only example in Sussex known to me of such visible survivals.

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The small manor house, or, as it is now called, Church Farm, which lies on the other side of the lane, makes up, with its granary and cart sheds, a picturesque group. Its age is Jacobean when, in architecture, Tudor Gothic was passing into Renaissance, producing what may be called a lovely hybrid. This is an excellent example with its gabled front, square-headed mullioned windows, noble porch and descending steps. Two squat-shaped mortars guard the entrance, relics of Ashburnham forge. It must be said that the Sussex iron industry throve on war; it was then the hammer beats could be heard far and wide over the country and the flare of furnace fires lit up the night sky. The piping times of peace were dull times for the forest workers. A good woman lives at this romantic abode. When she saw that Ray and I were filled with curiosity about the stones and sticks she invited us inside to admire the wainscotings, cupboards, and wide fireplaces set with cosy settles. She must have wondered at the readiness with which we accepted the invitation and the manner in which we inspected the house from basement to the rafters under the roof. Up there we found adze marks and carpenter's signs which showed that the timbering belonged to a still earlier building. We came down dusty and begrimed but with minds enlarged. I must not linger over the fireplaces of this wonderful house, wide, cavernous, with noble andirons, cranes to hold the pot—all still in use—firebacks cast in the woods below having the coronet and

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big A of the Ashburnham family and their border of acanthus leaves. One I noticed was dated 1813, which must have been a little before the fires went out and the age-long industry, beginning before history begins, ended.

I may as well add, for the help of readers who easily get puzzled, that all I have been writing about is not Penshurst (which is in Kent), the noble home of the Sidney family and a centre of tourist traffic, but Penhurst, a difference of one letter, a little church, little seen and little heard of, and within the borders of Sussex.

Have my readers ever heard of a 'herbary'? I do not mean by this term a kitchen garden, or a pot-herb garden, or a bit enclosed off for odds and ends from well-decked flower walks as something useful to be tolerated but not to be proclaimed. The herbary of long ago was a cherished part of every carefully made garden, when doctors were distant and when self-respecting housewives considered it was not necessary to send for him at every ache, pain, blister and scratch. There are a few left, and I found one this day which I visited with profit and pleasure, and I will not say where, but it was part of the day's outing. I can never think of that herbary without visions of an old house, of a still-room having an honoured place, of linen-presses fragrant with lavender and, tucked in corners of chair and sofa, dainty bags of rose-leaves, and, indeed, of a house faintly odoriferous with herbs sweet and gracious.

The herb garden, speaking of it generally, with

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its odd spices and aromatic shrubs has fallen from the high estate it once held. It was of old a necessary adjunct of the vegetable garden and essential to high cookery. The herbary has nearly vanished before the cozening wares of the grocer's shop. You can buy, I believe, cut and powdered, or in liquid form, nearly all the savouries and essences which go to judicious cookery. If these have not the freshness of green herbs just out of the garden and their first fragrance, well—they are easily come by, ready to hand, and they are cheap.

My Lady of the Herbarry took me into a square plot sheltered by a high wall on one side and by quickset hedges on the other. I had seen portions of her domain, but evidently this was the garden of her delight, and I learnt a great deal which belongs to the mysteries of the still-room and the super arts of cookery. It was like dipping into pages of old Gerard's book. I wish I had the learning and skill to reproduce to my readers some of the deep things my Lady poured out that morning. I gathered in a dim way that there are both art and science in a properly ordered herb garden; it is for use and it is for ornament. Avoid for your herbs, she told me, soil which is undrained and sour; or where there is the drip of trees, or where bitter winds reach, for, like children, these plants wilt and wither under unkind conditions. Also in arranging your borders remember there is a decorative quality in the leaves as much as, nay more than, in the flowers. The mottled

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foliage of lungwort, the grey-greens of mulleins, the warm grass hues of others make lovely contrasts and minister to eye and soul.

Mint and sage and thyme, I was informed, should align the path and be laid widely and within easy reach, for these are savouries in frequent use. Balm and marjoram can stand back. They are plants beloved of thoughtful and artistic cooks. The latter, marjoram, is also, if I may digress, beloved of quacks and others of that tribe. I read some years ago of a hair-restorer whose merits were proclaimed on every hoarding, in every newspaper, for its miracle-like powers of re-clothing heads become bare. Its sale was enormous, but it came out in a court action that the only constituent of this wonder was common marjoram. The cost was three-halfpence a bottle, the price ten and sixpence, and I present this information to my readers for nothing!

I fear I have forgotten the many good things of that herb garden I ought to retail. There was fennel, I remember, at the back, because the sight of it set me wondering whatever use fennel could serve. My Lady told me that she kept it chiefly for old associations' sake and because it was of a rich green and made a good backing, also that it was served up with cold salmon or with mackerel. I recall that Piers Plowman speaks of 'a ferthing's worth of fynkel-seed for fastynge daies.' There were sorrel as an ingredient for soups, borage for flavouring cool-tankards—and what a lovely flower borage is, one of the

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fairest blues of a garden. Tansy to-day is chiefly used as a garnish, but of old, and still in western districts, it is an ingredient for a certain strong-flavoured pudding. Outside culinary needs there are lavender to sweeten the sheets, rosemary for the still-room, anise, coriander and caraway for cakes, white horehound, clary, pennyroyal, camomile, betony, for coughs, colds, feverings, finger cuts and other ills flesh is heir to. Here was a glimpse of a garden from long ago, days when there were no stores with hundreds of odds and ends to go to, no apothecary's shop at hand, and when most folk were in no hurry to call in the leech for ordinary maladies.

## CHAPTER XVI

### CHILDREN OF ISHMAEL

SARAH HILDER is a friend of mine. She is of Romany extraction, so she says, but I suspect she is half-and-half. You can generally find out by putting a few gipsy words to them such as Borrow's *Romany Rye* supplies. I find most of these wanderers want to be taken for Romanies, who form, so to speak, the aristocracy of the road. Your true Romany holds up high his head.

Sarah and I met when at my vicarage home among the Downs. I may say that, like Goldsmith's parson, my 'house was known to all the vagrant train'. I received visits and often the friendship of all sorts of the road fraternity—convicts, misfits, spendthrifts, down-at-heels, and the many to whom the trail of the open road is an insistent passion. I made the discovery that you get courtesy for courtesy from these motley pilgrims. It is wonderful what a lot of information you can gather, strange pieces of road-lore, glimpses of an underworld, and sometimes no little amusement.

Sarah Hilder has found me out in my new house of retirement, and comes at wide intervals. She always carries a pedlar's pack with oddments for sale, and a baby, always a baby. The babies she



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brings are not her own, only borrowed, and she tells me this in sorrowful tones. She has had seven children; five died in infancy and two have reached robust maturity. I find gipsy life for babies is 'either kill or cure.' Sarah has a passion for babies, and tells me she cannot go out on her rounds with any comfort to herself without carrying one. I might explain that I first got to know Sarah by having to baptize one of her dear—and now—lost ones. The name given was Jasper, and I so much liked that quaint old name that we became friends at once.

Gipsy babies, so it seems to me, are particularly solemn little mortals; their gaze is profound and detached. I thought I saw features which suggested Socrates in the pug nose and heavy forehead of the one she brought to-day.

'He's a pore little thing,' observed Sarah, 'but what can you expect? He's father has been down for weeks and weeks with rheumattics; it's eatin' him up; an' his mother with two other little things to look after is pretty worn out. So I says, "Jessie, give him here to me. I'll look arter him till things are better."'

My reader, do not think gipsy life is all gay, free and buoyant. They live, indeed, where others would starve; they live on the very crumbs of the world's stores, and know at times what sharp, persistent hunger means. They use, as they have used in the course of their long history, every dodge to get a living. Fortune telling from the beginning, when they arrived in England 'vaga-

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bonds from Egypt', as a Tudor statute expressed it, and they still do it. It is generally winked at by the law, because it pleases serving-maids and society women, and to no one's hurt. I do not know whether any significance belongs to the lines which differently in different people mark the palm of the hand, but I am sure of this, some mystic power dwells in this primitive race. They see things, they know things, and they read secrets. They have gleams into the hinterland of human consciousness.

But the use of 'second sight' is an occupation shrouded and furtive; it is a bypath for those of them with quick eyes and trained insight. They follow many trades. Peddling is one, though disliked, for the big stores, Woolworth's in particular, have outbid them with cheap goods and all but ousted them. There is the making and selling of green besoms, but these are in little use to-day. Mending cane chairs, making and selling clothes pegs and props is another line.

Sarah Hilder has told me much of these matters. 'Jim Stanley,' she remarked, 'him as makes an' sells clothes props and pegs, has gone to prison. He was caught by the gamekeeper with two rabbits, and there was no getting out of it. If only the keeper had turned up quarter of an hour later they would have been in the pot and nothing could have been done. As he had no money to pay a fine, and it was not the first time he'd been copp'd, he had to go. How Lizzie is to manage with two childer, I don't know.'

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Then there was the case of Ned Lee, 'a good-for-nothing,' said Sarah. 'He's no credit to us gipsy-folk and no good to his family. He was up for horse-stealing; it was a clear case, and his wife would have been glad of his absence for a time, but one of his pals, as bad a lot as himself, swore an alibi. May God forgive him, but Lizzie won't, for telling a mighty lie. Ned got off.'

These are some of the tales I hear at the doorstep.

Two spectres are always about their path. The village constable is not one, or not often; he is generally indulgent in spite of by-laws, and at nightfall can turn a blind eye to the wayside pitch. The two terrors I have alluded to are: one, hunger and want, and the other, bronchial or rheumatic ailments due to their manner of life, the cold and the damp, which in time tells. You read sometimes in newspapers of gipsies here and there reaching an advanced age; it is true of some but they are few, most of them flicker out at about sixty. Why don't they live, you may ask, like ordinary people? The answer is that they are not ordinary people. Wanderlust is in their blood: it has come down to them from times in a dim past when, some of them, their ancestors roamed the steppes of Central Asia. 'Your children shall inherit the unrest of the wind.' They feel stifled in small houses, and if working in factories they would be as caged swallows. They are wanderers by instinct and long tradition. For them the tent, the touch of cool air at dawn, the long road, the curl of the

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smoke of the wood-fire at the end of the day—all these are a passion. There are those who know no better who say they are unclean. It makes me angry when that word is flung at them. It is a word of more than one meaning, and I have heard of highly affected young men and society women who tub themselves regularly and yet are unclean.

Have they any religion? Of course they have. Everybody has. Even loud atheists know and feel that they move about in worlds not realized, and these people of the wild are deeply reverent in their attitude towards sacred things. I count them, in their child simplicity, among 'the little ones' whom One greatly loved. I wonder that the Church of England, to which I belong and which has, I know, a great heart and wide arms, leaves out of her activities these people of the heath and wayside patches. Surely among the many of her younger clergy there are those who also feel the call of the road and of a strange people, and who would go after them, learn their ancient speech and live their life. Here is adventure and romance quite as much as missionary work among the Dyaks of Borneo and Papuans of New Guinea. The Christian Church has done much for the natives of Central Africa and those of lonely isles of the sea, but here is a large nomadic people who are as strangers within our gates.

So at Sarah's visits and those of my several nomad friends I hear news of the Ishmaels

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who nightly pitch their moving tent. There is much so real, true and humanly tender in the recital. They are as lovable and as interesting as are the birds and beasts and flowers of field and roadway.

## CHAPTER XVII

### PYNHAM PRIORY TO BARPHAM

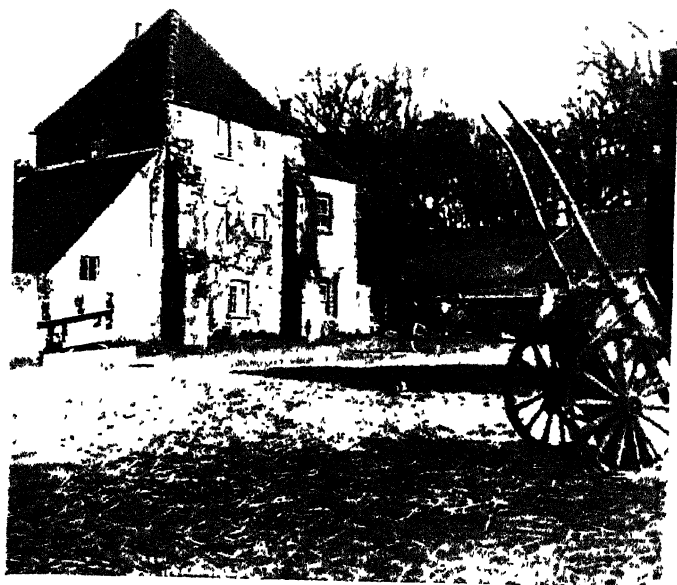
I TOOK my walk on a day of September, a day of soft grey light when distances look hazy and mysterious. I was out in search of some things of Sussex lost, or but little remembered, and yet which have beauty and interest.

I emerged for my walk at Arundel station. This part of the county is like a palimpsest: there is layer on layer of history and distant centuries, if only you have a mind to see and a heart to feel; these jostle against you. I had no sooner got out of the station and reached the highway than a host of pedlars, men-at-arms, friars, great lords, and others, a motley array, beset me. I will explain to you how it came about. I was on a terraced road, a causeway, which stretches from the hill-side coming down from Crossbush to Arundel bridge; on my right was the fragment, all that is left, of the priory of Pynham; on the other side a bridge and castle-crowned town; and all these things—castle, causeway and priory—brought to my mind an ancient story which gave colour and pageantry to the spot. It begins with Adeliza—who had been wife of Henry I and afterwards of William de Albini, Lord of Arundel—a Queen, afterwards a Countess, also a good woman.

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The high road is an old one; it is the coastwise way from Dover and Hastings and it goes on to Winchester and Southampton, and through the centuries there have passed a long stream of passengers, pilgrims, merchants, soldiers and labouring folk. Here from the point now marked by the railway station and as far as the river crossing was a low-lying tract which for more than half the year was water-soaked and horribly boggy.

It was in 1151, or a little before, that Adeliza, a woman given to good works, made effective and permanent provision for winter wayfarers and others by building the small priory house of Pynham in order that three to four men should live under a rule of prayer and work, and so for that reason were styled 'canons'. The work that they should do, besides that of gardening to provide food for their table, was to build and maintain a causeway across the marshland; also to repair as occasion required the stockbridge over the Arun. A third obligation was that the 'canons of the causeway' should always keep open their little chapel for wayfarers, for those who listed to enter and pray, and to give shelter and comfort to 'poor travellers'. It must be said that the endowment for these wide duties was not an abundant one. It is likely the Lady Adeliza thought that, as time went on, others would add to the income. If so, it never happened; all their days the brethren had to eat the bread of carefulness. They had stone allowed from the quarry



PYNHAM PRIORY, ARUNDEL

ALL THAT IS LEFT OF IT





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adjoining the priory to build up the road; oak was sent to them by the lord of Arundel for the bridge; but their sustenance seemed to be derived from a small bit of meadow land and some scanty tithes, and all through their history they lived in holy poverty, indeed mostly in debt. The end came in 1525. William Ayling was the last prior, a name, we may say, of interesting Sussex ancestry; he and two brethren formed the last of those who laboured and prayed at the causeway. Pynham Priory, or de Calcetto as it was more frequently termed, was one of the morsels swept up by Wolsey for the endowment of his great college at Oxford.

If any of my readers want to know more of this little lost priory they will find it—it is not a great deal—in the huge tomes of Dugdale's *Monasticon*, or in the narrative of L. F. Salzman in the second volume of the *Victoria County History of Sussex*.

But I do think I ought to tell my readers, before I leave the matter, of my walk by the cross-road at Warningcamp. There I found a damsel in distress; her motor car had a punctured tyre and would only travel slantwise, which is a wrong thing for a motor car to do. The car was a brilliant scarlet, so was the damsel—at least the jaunty beret she wore was of that colour, and some knick-knacks about her neck and her lips, which in redness outdid the cherry. She was a gay young thing, and why not? There is room in this world for many sorts and God has made butterflies as well as sober bees. I liked her pluck and the way

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she took things. We soon got the maimed tyre off and with a bit of pushing fixed on the spare one, and off she went. I ventured to ask whether she was out to enjoy the fair things of the country-side. 'Not at all,' she replied; 'it's too dull for me. I like speed. I should like to fly. I prefer the clatter of a jazz band and I don't care what the highly superior think of it.' So my lady, as gay in her outfit as a cardinal, smiled, and we parted.

Above Pynham Priory a road turns from the mainway and goes left, passing in circuitous fashion under a pleasant wooded hill-side to Burpham. A little beyond the turn and on the right is a bank, and at the point where it edges Batworth Park a small earthwork. The earthwork may be of Celtic date or it may be later. Hadrian Allcroft, who wrote much of this district, was inclined to regard it as what he called a 'circus', one of several to be found in Sussex, that is, a raised mound with a large circular dip in it where Saxon folk gathered, or their senators, for open-air moot. On the same side and a little distance beyond is the more considerable earthwork called Warnar's camp, which apparently guarded the old road that passed by it and went straight down to the river ford below. I am told local tradition still recalls a ford, and although much embanking and scouring have raised the height of the water at this part yet still at low tide there is a depth of about three feet. Nearly all ancient fords had a chapel for wayfarers to say a prayer before they made the crossing. I dare say they

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crossed gaily enough at low water and during the clear summer seasons, but it might be a different matter when winter nights came and winds blew with a rising tide. So at Warningcamp ford, though there was no Saint Christopher to assist the aged, the tired and faint-hearted on winter nights, there was a little chapel, whose site is marked on the ordnance map a little distance away, where they could linger for a minute and say a prayer.

In the many happy journeys I have made to Burpham I have generally eschewed the round-about roadway, though that has charm and interest, and followed the footpath which, after crossing a field, follows the river-side. I did so to-day. For those on the look-out for creatures, whether bird, beast, insect, reptile, flowers, this is a splendid hunting-ground, especially if you are out on a hot morning of midsummer. Snakes love the heat. I had a friend who regularly took this walk; he told me that in one morning he met four vipers and captured each one of them by a swift seizure of their necks. Personally I have no affection for these beasts and no wish to capture any, but I would gladly have made friends with an otter I encountered lying out on the grassy footpath, but he declined my overtures as I edged towards him, and entered the water. I have an opinion that an otter would be as friendly and as affectionate as a dog, but the fact is he cannot trust us. He is hated, pursued and persecuted by sportsmen, who go out with rod and line and somehow believe, totally without warrant,

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that the Almighty has given to them all the fish in the river, and so they bitterly resent this brown-eyed, frolicsome fellow fisherman who is, I consider, one of the most delightful of beasties left in our land. May he, in spite of the chidings of jealous anglers, continue to flourish by the banks of the Arun waters.

There are flowers along this stretch of water-side in abundance; some both fair and rare. The Arun in this part of its course, that is, between Houghton bridge and that at Arundel, winds in wide loops and resembles in its sinuosities the Cuckmere below Excett bridge. Before the advent of the railway the Arun was an important highway for those settled along its banks, so much so that several 'cuts' were made, the last as recent as 1862, to shorten the journey and increase the flow. Hadrian Allcroft mentions that every considerable farmer hereabouts had his barge, and some made voyage to London and even, by the Rother, the Wey, and canal, to Birmingham.

The walk from the lost ford of Warningcamp to Burpham village is a little under two miles, and you enter the village street through a cutting in the chalk cliff.

Some place-names there are which breathe history and suggest the story of their beginning. Burpham is one of these. It is a compound of 'burgh' and 'ham' and means the village beside the rampart. The huge rampart with fosse scooped out beside it is impressive. It is possibly the last earthwork of its kind to be made in Sussex,

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and was reared, though this is a conjecture, as a protection against inroads of Danes. In the 'Burghal Hidage' of Ethelred, which was a list of burghs or protected areas compiled in the tenth century, it is mentioned, and must have existed some time before this. The village nestles close up against the rampart on its northern side, and the main street lies in the sunken way of the fosse.

The place-names of the parish are fragrant with folk-lore. There is Peppering, Wepham—and both these 'steads' are mentioned in Domesday Book—the Coombe, Avenal, the Lynchets, the Lepers' Way and Friday's Church. These each have a story. The latter name is suggestive. What does it mean, Friday's Church? There have been, I am told, searchings for stones and investigations on the spot to find a building which would account for the name, but without success. Now the word 'kirk' did not originally mean a building but a place of worship. In the earliest days our Saxon forefathers loved the open-air for all their gatherings, whether for deliberation in 'moot' or for the worship of Freya, and later, when it came, for the worship of the 'White Christ'. There are many place-names called after Freya—Friday's Hill, 'Friday's Street', and other forms. In pagan Saxondom she stood for beauty, the beauty of the world, the magic movement of Springtime, for Love which sweetens human relationships, and not least for Good Luck. With the coming of a new religion

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the name changed in the popular mind but not the figure. The Mother of Our Lord takes the place of Freya with a halo more refined and spiritual. She is the eternal symbol of beauty and tears, love and great sorrow welded together.

Burpham village is one of the few places as yet unspoilt. The modern builder has not yet met with success. One would not resent the coming of the builder if only he would build in harmony with surroundings, but in my wanderings among some fair despoiled villages of Sussex the builder, it would seem, is unwilling to use any material but brick or that assertive abomination—at least when cast among green fields and hedgerows—white and coloured rough-cast. The materials of the country to which the place belongs—grey flints of Downlands, the water-worn stones of beachlands, warm red sandstone of the Weald, hung tiles, those which are handmade, and oaken timbering—materials which belong to the place and blend with the scenery, these are rejected. Bricks are easy to work, you just put one on another; moreover it is cheap, and so erections which must remain for ever alien and incongruous are arising. Burpham's immunity in this respect may be due to its remoteness, the road which reaches it goes there and nowhere else, and many motorists do not like that.

There are some charming cottage gardens in the village. On this September day I saw tall hollyhocks, phloxes, sweet williams, love-in-a-mist, the hardy monthly rose and Michaelmas

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daisy. I missed, however, to-day one flower which though plentiful in the west of England is very rare in Sussex, that is wall pennywort. It is a quaint thing and used to grow in a heavy, drooping mass from a cottage wall close to the vicarage. I suppose the mason has been at work with trowel and done his job too thoroughly, for now it has entirely gone. I miss also an aged labourer who used to sit out with an oaken stick in the sunlight. This was more than thirty years ago, and long since he migrated. I liked to hear him talk of the old days at Burpham and a vicar of blessed memory, Robert Foster, who loved the church and every one of his people, the very bad as well as the good, and of Archdeacon Mount, who for a time all too short was vicar, and whom I think of as with a halo around him. The old man's talk was like a refrain of lost music. 'Ah, sir, the years that are gone, the people that have lived and died, speak to me. When I am sitting here by myself and hear the noise of children shouting, and chuckle of poultry, and footsteps coming and going, and the wind in the trees, it all seems to belong to the years that are gone.' So they do, for they are among the everlasting things of human life, and Isaac, when his eyes were dim and he sat by the tent door on the hills of old Judea, would hear just the same sounds.

The church as one entered it from the outside light looked cool grey and in a half-light. But in contrast you see opposite the open door a low small window of rich and glowing colours. It is



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a memorial to a young flying officer, the vicar's son, who came to an earthly ending on the edge of Arabian sands and the eagle here displayed rising in her strength is like a call of 'Sursum Corda' to those who mourn.

The dominant feature of Burpham Church is the Norman work which belongs to the nave and transepts, but there are besides several styles and ages in its architecture. Two features may be regarded as of especial interest in this church. One is the moulding of the Norman arch which faces the south transept. It is an acutely pointed chevron, deeply undercut and giving, as was intended, to the massive stonework a touch of lightness and grace. Its age is about 1160. The other feature is the stone vaulting of the chancel. This is of a period a little later, about 1190, when Norman architecture was merging into early Gothic. The ribs of the vaulting are, to use a technical expression, quadripartite. In the Lady Chapel of Chichester Cathedral are the same unusual mouldings of the vault ribs, and as it belongs to the same time as this of Burpham it may have been done by the same workmen. In the chancel behind the vicar's stall is a 'low side' window with some glass of quaint character. They are three roundels showing St. Margaret and the dragon; Abraham 'entertaining angels unawares'; the Annunciation, where only a skirt and hand of the Virgin are visible; the rest of the glass is taken up with a coat of arms with a coroneted swan as crest. In the background a

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monkey is amusing himself, and there is a many-towered cathedral. The glass is apparently of Flemish workmanship and of the seventeenth century.

In the north side of the nave is a three-light window of the Perpendicular period with figures of the Three Maries. There is a north door showing a Saxon overlap. The font is one of a kind found not infrequently in Sussex, as at Bury, Fittleworth and Sullington: octagonal, quatre-foiled, with a four-leaved flower. Its date is about 1400. There are a few oaken benches at the west end which belong to the fifteenth century, stiff-backed, narrow-seated, the kind to keep the worshipper awake.

Latest in date and giving dignity and a character not only to the church but to the whole village is the noble stone tower. It was reared about 1450; it has a shallow bell turret with pyramidal cap, and the stone, as also of some other parts of the building, is the sandstone of Pulborough quarry, many-tinted—brown, orange and purple.

There are historical records which indicate that in distant ages Burpham Church was loved and cared for by those who gathered for worship within its walls. Gifts, additions and bequests to add beauty and brightness were made to it down to the very eve of the Reformation. Here are two entries just before the great change: Thamas at-Lee, 1521: 'Item, to the hye altar of Burpham, a bushell of whete; also I bequeth to

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Our Lady's taper, a bushell of barley.' Richard Smith, 1531: 'I bequeth to the said church of Burpham 6 ewe sheep, to be a stock to maintain 3 tapers, one before the blessed Rood, another before Our Blessed Lady, and the third before Saint Sunday.' This last does not refer to a personal saint but to Easter Day, which in the Christian Church is the great Sunday of the year.

Burpham was a village beloved by Ruskin, partly I think because it dwelt by little-trodden ways. It is meet there should be left a few fair places not easily accessible except by those on foot, and this can be said of Burpham resting between river cliff and wide Downs.

At the end of the village street is a wide vista of hills, bottoms, green trackways and scattered homesteads. Everywhere are vestiges, in lynchets, barrows and earthworks, of races lost before history begins. One cannot but wonder what sort of a people they were, what language they spoke, whether any words now in use of humble things and ordinary objects still linger in our language. But these vestiges though abundant are silent; we have slowly to piece together from dim tokens their way of life, their appearance and their outlook on the world. But with all we can conjecture these peoples live beyond our skyline.

Three ways meet here. That to the right goes roundabout to Arundel; the middle way, if you go far enough, reaches the top of Rackham Hill,

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and from there is an extensive view of green spaces of the Weald. Just below Rackham is Parham Park, and at its far end is, of the heronries of Sussex, the largest and most interesting. In the month of May when the young are being fed by the parent birds it is a fascinating sight to see these noble creatures incessantly coming and going. On the left, as you stand at the end of Burpham Street, the road soon becomes a grassy track and goes towards Amberley Mount. It runs by 'Canada' where, within an earthwork, are remains of a British village.

There is an ancient road here coming from North Stoke; it passes on to a large barrow marked on the ordnance map as 'The Burgh', and then moves to Rackham Hill. The barrow, as is not infrequently the case, marks a parish boundary. From Amberley Mount you look down on Amberley village, with a glimpse of a little Norman church, and close by the castle, an episcopal castle it was in the days when bishops of Chichester were also feudal lords. Under the castle and stretching northwards are the 'Wild Brooks', a spot known and loved by the field botanist. There is a ferry of the Arun beyond the 'Brooks', and you pass by the village church of Bury and reach, at a corner close to where the well-known writer, Galsworthy, built his house, the high road to Arundel.

I took none of these ways, but a track on the right by a shoulder of Wepham Down, for I was in search of the site of an ancient and long-lost

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church which dwelt remote on the heights of Upper Barpham. It was a roundabout but not very lengthy way back to Arundel, and I had an additional reason for the shorter section, for now in the afternoon the sunlight had passed from the sky, there was a moaning sound in the air and I knew rain was coming.

The path round Wepham Down is known as the 'Lepers' Way'. Why this name I do not know, but it is old and persistent. There was a leper hospital at Arundel and two at Chichester, but there is no record and no trace of one about here. Lepers of the Middle Ages were a lonely and outcast folk, and it is likely they tramped along this way, and—who knows—Lee Farm or Combe Ivy, which are miles from everywhere, may have been a place of their sojourn.

There is a flora of these hills of special interest; several have the charm both of beauty and rarity. Along the Lepers' Way I noticed marjoram giving colour and fragrance to the wayside; clustered campanula in little groups; wild clematis in profusion and now becoming 'old man's beard'; several mints, among them pennyroyal, the drop-wort, perhaps better known by the euphonious Latin name, *Spirea filipendula*. There was the soft blue of sheep's scabious and deeper-tinted, round-headed rampion, knapweed, fleabane, bits of lingering sainfoin, tall heads of stone parsley, and, deep in the grass, quinsy-wort and purging flax. I looked for that shy orchid of September, Our Lady's Tresses, but did not find

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it, though I dare say if one looked long enough it was there.

As I rounded the shoulder of the Down and got in sight of Lee Farm—surely this is the farthest and loneliest hamlet in all Sussex—the rain began in earnest, and I saw a stretch of hills and valley bottoms in a blur. Rain when it comes slowly generally continues. This did. Harrow Hill, Blackpatch and Kithurst were wreathed in mist. All these places have footmarks of lost peoples, and if my readers wish to learn what so far is known about them in these places, they will find it abundantly written in Volume LXV. of the *Sussex Archæological Collections*, and, in concise and attractive fashion, the book, *Prehistoric Sussex*, by Dr. Cecil Curwen. If any hill of Sussex is still haunted with ghosts it must be Harrow Hill which rises above Lee Farm. Here is a quadrangular earthwork with deep fosse, signs of pit dwellings, flint mines where men sought soft workable flints with staghorn picks and ox shoulder-bone shovels, and the very name, Harrow, means a place of heathen worship. I was told by an old woman of Lee Farm that it was the last home of fairies in Sussex before the noises of modern times and irreverent investigations and a cold unbelief drove them finally away.

Burpham and Barpham are names easily confused; there is but the difference of a letter between them yet they are apart not only in place and local history but in root form. According to Mawer and Stenson in their valuable book, *The*

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*Place-names of Sussex*, one means the 'ham by the fort' and the other the 'hill-homestead'. There is an Upper and Lower Barpham with farmsteads at each which, in all likelihood, are on the sites of those which gave names to the locality.

As I ascended the last part of the lane leading to Upper Barpham the rain increased. Up to then it had been a gentle fall, but now the bottles of heaven were outpoured; there was a sizzling on the grass, the rain entered my ears, dripped down my face, soaked through between collar and skin, and, to tell the full tale, the waterproof I had put on belied its name. I got wet through. So I was in no condition when I reached the site of the lost church of Barpham to linger by it, measure it and muse over it as I should have liked. It is in 'chapel field', near an old farmhouse, and there are thatched barns and sheds about. Along the turf lines of nave and chancel are clearly indicated, and I noticed one or two loose stones, one having filleted lines of a window jamb shaft. Within the chancel space an ash tree grows.

There is no history, so far as I know, of this remote hamlet church. Probably it took its beginning as the chapel of a Saxon owner whose steading was where now stands the picturesque farm-house behind a garden of hollyhocks, canterbury bells and useful pot-herbs. The parish church is at Angmering, more than three miles away; the building had the rights of a 'free chapel' and would serve for the lord and his dependants.

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Centuries later, with a shrinkage of population, the chapel became largely forsaken and derelict. Early in the sixteenth century Bishop Robert Sherburne (1508-1536) took its small emoluments and added to them those of another abandoned church, St. James's Spital, at Seaford, to found a prebendary in Chichester Cathedral. It was one of four to be held only by Wykehamists; the prebendaries were to be men of sober life, and scholarly habits, who would serve God both in the study and by joining in the daily services of the cathedral. Bishop Sherburne was one of the best of the long line who have occupied the stool of Chichester; he was of reforming mind, sound judgment and a lover of noble ornate ritual. The times he lived in, however, were troubled and changing, and his last years were overcast. He desired reforms in the Church but not a revolution. This was one of his efforts, the gathering the income of several unused churches to form prebends for men who would give of their learning and piety to serve in the Mother church of the diocese and dwell there in continual residence. Another of these little lost churches which went to form a 'Wiccamical' prebend was at Excett on the eastern headland looking out at sea. Its outline of nave, porch and horseshoe-shaped chancel is still clearly marked on the turf.

This one, the forgotten church of Barpham, stands on the tip of a hill, near the 500-foot contour, and catches every wind that blows. On a clear day there is a wide outlook—on one side



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waves of Downland, on the other a belt of green lands, and, beyond, the grey seas. After dusk you see the intermittent gleam of the Owers light between Selsey Bill and the Isle of Wight.

Broad and bare to the skies,  
The great Down country lies.

To-day I did not linger at this spot. I was wet within and without, and started on the last stage of my day's tramp to meet a bus which plies on the high road below between Worthing and Arundel. It was a two-mile walk and would have been one of loveliness under kinder conditions of weather, for there are scattered copses of pine and beech and open lands of bracken and heath. When I reached the end of the two-mile descent a roadman sheltering from the rain at the corner gave me the melancholy news that the Arundel bus had just passed, and the next was due in an hour and quarter's time; so my vision of home, a hot bath and a meal grew distant. But life is full of cheerful surprises and one came to me then, for after two minutes of watching a rain-bespattered road a huge motor lorry came along with a vast load of wire-netting, and it stood still. The driver, whom I would describe as of the Order of the Good Samaritan, had caught sight of me, a dripping, disconsolate creature gazing at the road, and he asked whether I would like a lift into Arundel. Of course I would like a lift into Arundel! And had the tractor been a spanking Rolls-Royce instead of what it was, drab, ugly

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and smelly, I could not have mounted with greater alacrity. Now I cannot leave out of the day's account some mention of the friendly motor-driver. It is right to remember and cherish all the acts of goodwill along life's undulating way. The only thing I have against that driver is that he refused, when I reached the station, to accept the small coin I proffered. In a short run I learnt several things about a lorry-driver's life. He had come that morning from Margate and after some detours to make delivery hoped to reach Southampton. Then there would be a hunt for shelter and food, and next morning he must go on to Bristol. What mileage such a man must daily cover! He was a skilful driver and an obliging one. Two anxieties beset him: to keep up the daily distances his employers required and to keep within the laws of the realm. My drab-looking lorryman I reckon as of the aristocracy of the road, venturesome, skilful, courteous; in Chaucer's phrase, 'a veray parfit gentil knight.'

## CHAPTER XVIII

### AT EGDEAN

THE country around Petworth and Pulborough is a well-known one. It is one of the playgrounds of leisured people, and of that larger number who, in their busy lives, take a holiday when they can, and scour the country roads in motor cars. So the highways and some of the byways are fairly lively. I know this because in some walks I took, as there were no sideways, I faced destruction every minute. Yet it is a fact I found a multitude of places where dwelt a great silence, and which in their appearance and surroundings belonged more to the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries than to the twentieth.

I found, for instance, Egdean, a tiny hamlet with a tiny church to serve it, and the latter of some beauty and interest. I wonder how many of my readers know Egdean. It is one of many places in Sussex I would describe as near by and yet far off. Who of the hundreds who pass every day along the wide, well-surfaced road which runs from Pulborough to Petworth ever turn aside by a rough narrow lane on the left; or, if on foot, go through a woodland of pines and reach a little common where bracken grows, and scattered birch. Here are some cottages reared by

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builders who evidently loved their job, some three or four hundred years ago; they have high-pitched, tiled roofs, dormer windows, and pleasant, hooded doorways. If you go on Monday, as I did, you will find it is washing day, and white linen is fluttering out on the common and getting bleached in the summer sunlight. I like washing days; at least, I should say, I like the brave sight of white sheets, pillow-cases, and the useful underwear of working folk getting renewed for the toils of another week. As a working parson, I know how much a good woman of the cottage values a fine clear day on Mondays, for then she gets the work of the week well in hand.

It is little more than a furlong from the high road where the small church of Egdean stands. It is by a wood, and slightly aloof from the hamlet. To me St. Bartholomew's of Bleatham (for that is an alternative name of the parish, and in frequent use in earlier years) is of special interest. It is built in the style which I may call Caroline Gothic. There was an earlier building, but this apparently was entirely taken down; the only survival of it is the font. For a few years in the reign of Charles I., owing to the influence of Archbishop Laud, whose life brought vigour and vitality to all he touched, whether it was the colleges of Oxford or the forms and ceremonies of daily worship, there was much church re-building and re-fashioning. Egdean Church is one of the few instances of what may be called the Laudian revival in Sussex, at least on the architectural

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side. South Malling is another, though this was due also to the piety of the Evelyn family; also there is the graceful brick porch of Ford Church and that of Elsted.

In 1663 there came to Egdean as resident minister one George Bradshaw, worn and broken in health. He was accounted of 'high' views in Church matters, and held at the beginning of the Commonwealth period an important living in Berkshire. Of this he was dispossessed by the 'Triers', and because of his zeal for the King's cause and for the old Church—perhaps unwisely paraded—'was so hotly pursued that he was forc'd to abscond the greatest part of one summer in a Wod, and Associate himself with a Collier (charcoal-burner) in Kent. And was reduced to such straights for a subsistence that he was forced afterwards to get his Bread and livelyhood by keeping a small Alehouse on the road between Ripley and Cobham.' Are there any other instances, I wonder, of a Clerk in Holy Orders driven to keep an alehouse for daily bread?

At the Restoration this brave old parson found peaceful anchorage in the parish and at the church of Egdean, with the not overflowing income of £30 a year. It was not for long; he died five years after his institution.

For many years the parish has had no parson of its own. It also has lost its parsonage. One would think it would form a retreat and home for an aged priest; or one following letters; or one fulfilling so many diocesan functions that he has

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no time for real parish work. I have known several, high and mighty in diocesan affairs, who have had neither leisure nor disposition for such matters as house-visiting, school-teaching and other small details. Egdean, with its small emoluments, has been added on alternatively to Petworth or to Fittleworth.

The present church of Egdean was built in 1622. You are informed of this by a date cut in brick over the doorway. Its outside walling is largely of a pleasant, greenish-tinted sandstone, which comes, I think, from the Ventnor quarries. The rest of the building is brick, and it is an altogether lovely example of noble brickwork at one of its best periods. The south doorway has a depressed and slightly four-centred arch, with a straight weather moulding cornered at each end above it; a pleasing bit of work. Around the church are buttresses, partly of stone and partly of brick. Within is a wide-spanned chancel arch of brick. Also, brick is used in the window splays, and within the sanctuary is a neat little brick aumbry.

The church outside and inside is clean, trim and lovingly cared for; the sort of church one would like to worship in. In the churchyard are graves and memorials of rectors still gratefully remembered.

I noticed that of Arthur Barwick Simpson, vicar also of Fittleworth, who, in his time, was an enthusiastic campanologist, and to-day held in honour by all who love this solemn music, which

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seems to breathe the spirit of ages that are past. It was Simpson of Fittleworth who discovered a method of tuning great church bells, and pointed a way to a method of bell-founding in which tone and tune became not haphazard in result, but cast on a system which brought harmony between bell and bell, and between stroke note and hum note.

## CHAPTER XIX

### TRAVELLERS OF THE NIGHT

I WOKE in the early hours of a March morning and listened. It was very dark, very cold, at least the air which came through the partly opened window breathed of winter frost, also it was very still. Yet not altogether. Far away and seemingly from a great distance, there came, ever so faint, sounds of a movement, of a hurrying host passing overhead. I knew what it meant. Thousands on thousands of birds, one of the great caravans, was going through the darkness on a bi-annual journey. There was something one might almost describe as eerie in this faint sound of beating wings and constant cries. For birds keep up a continual chorus of calls and pipings in order, during the vast trek, not to lose touch with each other.

I daresay many of my readers have listened to the passing of birds like this. Sussex is not on what one might call a great trunk line of bird movement, but its coast and the range of Downs, and where prominent objects stand out, like the Isle of Wight, the inlets of Chichester Harbour, the white sea cliffs, the Hastings rock and the shingled point of Dungeness, these form what one might term an important secondary road for



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feathered visitors when they arrive oversea to pass north or to pass east.

Although most of the travellers move on swiftly and unstaying, especially in the spring rush, yet some, the over-tired and fatigued, linger here and there. You can find during these seasons at the estuaries of all the south coast rivers, especially at those like Cuckmere haven, which is sequestered and lonely, birds which do not belong to this land or which are not resident. For a few hours of daylight these strangers rest, gather food about the shore and when night settles they catch hearing of another caravan and mount to meet it. It seems strange that birds, or nearly all of them, which are normally only active in the daytime and blunder about almost aimlessly when disturbed at night, should choose the long darkness from sunset to dawn for the migration journey. I suppose all creatures, man as well as bird and beast, possess powers not only for times that are normal but for the special and supernormal—with the need comes the power. There are unknown or little-known reserves within all higher forms of creatures. So birds who linger through summer days about lane and copse, when the call comes for their migration rise to great heights, or heights unusual for them, and often in pitch darkness move on straight to their distant goal. Surely some access of strength comes to tiny, weak-winged creatures like the goldcrest moving over the North Sea at its widest point on the way to Scandinavia; or the chiff-

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chaff, the willow-wren, the garden warbler. The latter come over desert lands of Africa, the Mediterranean Sea and across the Channel waters.

It was generally said by many ornithologists a few years ago that for these long flights birds rose to great altitudes. Gätke, the famous bird observer of Heligoland, whose book of his thirty or more years of watching at this lonely station is a fascinating classic, gives as a careful surmise that most birds rise to a height of 8,000 or 10,000 feet or even more when on oversea and overland journeys, and that in a rarer atmosphere they pass with less resistance than in the denser strata below. This estimate of height is now much modified by information gathered from aeroplane observation. W. H. Nicholson, a careful English writer, estimates two to three thousand feet high is a more likely one, but some birds—as ducks and waders—will rise above the four thousand line. It is likely, too, that air sacs within the integument of the bird at certain parts of its body are filled with heated air and this assists the buoyancy of the bird.

There are birds, however, to whom the vastest journey is but a slight thing. Watch swallows, or, still more, swifts in their unceasing circles through summer days. From early dawn until late sunset they never or rarely stop in their flight, hawking for flies or merely playing. It is a movement apparently unceasing and apparently unwearied. It is thought that they rest and can even sleep while on wing. Close calculations have been

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made that a swift in its many circles on a single summer's day travels not less than 600 miles. Powers of locomotion at the migration season are greatly increased, and it can be reckoned that a swift will keep to an average of 180 miles in its spring flight from, say, Natal to its homeplace in England, and I have heard it averred that the dotterel will pass in a single night of nine hours some 2,000 miles on its way to the frozen tundras of Siberia. Lapwings in Andalusia travel in the interval of sunset and dawn over Northern Spain, the Bay of Biscay and the English Channel to these shores.

No undertaking in bird life is so hazardous, so crowded with dangers as in these tremendous episodes of spring and autumn migration. We perhaps have thought of it as a pleasant incident in their lives. They leave in the Fall days, which are getting drear with the touch of winter, long nights and empty lands, and they pass on to summer sunshine again and blue skies, and when the call comes to them of mating and nesting they return to what is indeed their homeland, often to the very lane, bush or cottage eave where for them life began, and so they work and play through a perpetual summer. That is true as far as it goes, but it is not all; there is another part in the story. For many, for the greater number, the journey is so vast and the demand on strength and energy so tremendous that a large proportion, I have seen it put at 40 per cent., fail to finish and are lost. Some fall with exhaustion, especially

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if the wind changes, or abnormal cold sets in. On many a bitter night when storms rise, thousand on thousand of frail short-winged birds like the golden-crested wrens, sink into the grey waters of the North Sea. Some are blown out of their way and die of hunger and weariness. Sailors tell stories of birds alighting to rest on the ship's rigging even a thousand miles from the mainland. These are tragedies which happen every day and night during migration. A lighthouse-keeper has tales to tell of appalling losses in bird life when winds have risen and clouds driven low down their flight. They circle in seeming myriads around the lantern whose bright light is for some a fatal lure. They appear to watchers in their numbers like snowflakes that rise and fall in the wind. Some dash against the glass face of the lantern and die, and others cling and hang on to the hard granite walling of the lighthouse. They seem blinded, baffled, confused. In recent years many bird lovers have contributed to supply perches and resting-places under the light. This has been done at several British lighthouses and countless birds have been saved by this simple expedient.

Another danger of the flight, less considerable yet together taking heavy toll, is the presence in almost all large caravans of birds of prey. Most of these are birds big, large-winged and strong. Sparrow hawks, peregrines, kestrels, honey-buzzards, which follow after, strike and kill easily among the crowds of travellers. Lighthouse-

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keepers catch sometimes the sudden plaintive cry of a victim.

Another incidence of migration not at all infrequent is that of birds which lose their way. Birds are not infallible, they can and do blunder, fall out from the party, take a wrong turning and then are hopelessly lost. Every observant Rambler in Sussex, especially on lonely spaces of Downland but also in all parts, will sometimes have a glimpse of a bird utterly strange and foreign to the land. This accounts for the report of singular-looking ones, which easily catch the eye, which make up a newspaper paragraph or provide gossip at the village inn. No summer passes without somewhere in Sussex is seen hoopoe, waxwing, rose pastor, oriole, siberian wren and other aliens. What has happened is that they have been blown out of the course or straggled and got lost and then have wandered more and more from the route, hoping to find it until sometimes they are a thousand and more miles from the fly-lines they belong to. The same fate overtakes them: they die, either mobbed by native birds who, following an instinct belonging to all creatures, resent and destroy whatever is strange and unusual, or it may be they fall victim to a 'sportsman's' gun, or they die in loneliness with failure of food and companionship.

All naturalists who have kept diaries record the sight of alien birds. There are many references in the letters of Gilbert White. I have been looking into the diary of a little-known but pains-

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taking ornithologist, Robert Nathaniel Dennis, Rector of East Blatchington, 1845-1869, who records an immense amount of bird observation in and around the Cuckmere haven. Here are four consecutive paragraphs dated 1861, 18th and 19th April:

'Reed told me that Alfred saw a bird supposed to be a Hoopoe in our field. The small birds were mobbing the Hoopoe.

'Saw a beautiful Hoopoe hopping about on the Seaford side of the pond. . . . I followed it, it had run on to a little hillock where it stood raising and depressing its crest and looking very graceful and beautiful in the full sun.

'At six o'clock as I was walking just above the elm trees I saw a bird, the flight of which struck me as very peculiar and exactly resembling the Golden Orioles which I saw two years ago. . . .

'Bedford tells me that a Bohemian Waxwing was seen eating *Pyrocanthus* berries in the garden of Putland, the Denton carpenter. It was afterwards killed by a Newhaven man.'

That is the fate of these lost pilgrims. The penalty for losing their way is death.

The spring migration of birds is more swift, eager and crowded than that of autumn. The call to family life, mating, breeding, nesting, is one of the primary and most insistent instincts of all animated life; with birds it is vigorous and compelling. And here I would go aside for a moment to say I know hardly anything more pitiful than the cravings at this season as well

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as at autumn of caged wild birds. The impulse is on them urgent and strong and they are restless to move out along the air trails in response to the call, and are denied. They may be called 'pets', fed with dainties, cosseted with kindness, but it is a kindness that is cruel. All the while the soul of the little creature is torn, chafed, distressed. Men and women often have to live thwarted lives, but they have other resources in the wide areas they possess and this denial to lower, simpler creatures is a grievous sight and an affront to Him who made them what they are.

On the Sussex Downs in early spring you may meet the bird which, in this county may be called the outrider, the pioneer of a vast army of feathered pilgrims, that is the wheatear. He loves for his alighting wide open spaces, bare and wind-swept. He is much less abundant than two or three generations ago, but when seen is easily recognized by the white rump, dark tail feathers and band across the eye. Others are coming. The chiff-chaff and the willow-wren will soon announce their arrival. They are more often heard than seen. Early in April the first swallow will appear, weary, hungry, 'hard at death's door' if fierce winds have blown, but in one day or two days there is full recovery. Pipits come and ring ousel come, passing on northward, and in secluded estuaries like the Cuckmere or lonely bits of the Sussex coastline will be seen the sand-piper. Others have left us: fieldfare, snow bunting, brambling and the frail, yet cold-loving

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thrush, the redwing. They have heard the call from Norway, Spitzbergen and Iceland, and gone.

It would seem that there are certain highways of the sky along which birds travel in vast numbers, what we may call trunk lines. From these other lines move off at angles as subsidiary pathways, but I should say much of this is still speculative and based on half-gleaned facts. There are certain places like the islet of Heligoland which seems to be an all-important crossway of bird fly-lines. At the height of the seasons birds pass in million upon million and Gätke writes of the night sky growing black with unnumbered hosts and the beat of wings, and faint calls make an impression on the watcher ever strange and almost weird. To some extent the same occurs at Gibraltar. That too is one of the great meeting and crossing places, though in a lesser degree than Heligoland. Moreover, there are certain points in the highways of the skies where birds, or certain of them, move off at right angles, follow a route which is seemingly indirect and circuitous. Why is this? In fact birds rarely fly direct to their goal. They follow coast lines, river valleys and sometimes, so it is averred by certain ornithologists, the edges of lost continents now beneath the sea, and river beds which were rivers in ages geological. They follow on in ways their distant ancestors followed when Ice Age movements and tropical movements first impelled their flight. These are but tentative explanations which may



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be considerably revised by further observations and further records.

The return journey of autumn is less rapid and impetuous. The great events of mating, nesting, family rearing, are over and they return by stages, resting and feeding on the way. The swift, which was last to come, is first to go, and the cuckoo who, too, is a laggard in arriving, goes soon after.

What impels them in this tremendous, exhausting and perilous undertaking? The two motives seem to be Love and Hunger. Two claims they are which dominate in degree all living things. But there are other questions which touch on areas we can never enter. The birds and beasts around us, though they are so close, yet live on other planes of mind and sensation, other ranges of experience, and are really as far from us as though they lived on another planet. There are questions we ask which can be answered only in tokens and dim forms of speech and some can never be answered, for they touch on things beyond the border.

## CHAPTER XX

### ON A SUSSEX ISLAND

WHICH is the loneliest, remotest, least seen, least known and altogether uttermost church in Sussex? Some of my readers who know the county well can think, perhaps, of several which approach this description. Away from the high tracks there are a few which seem to dwell aloof, out of the common gaze and yet possessing rare beauty and much historical interest. I can recall at this minute ever so many, living in fair backwaters and rarely seen. Here are some of them: Penhurst, Tarring Neville, Up Marden, Coombes, Chithurst, East Guldeford, Selham, Botolph's, Chidham, Egdean—this, a good example of Caroline brickwork. All these to be seen must be sought for and may be said to dwell in a Sussex Incognita, that is, as far as the common ruck of pedestrians and sedentary motorists are concerned.

The one I have in mind is lonelier and farther removed than any of these. Indeed, I venture to say that not one person in a thousand who dwells in Sussex and thinks they know Sussex has reached and discovered. It is Thorney, frequently called West Thorney. There was an East Thorney. That is now under the sea beyond Bracklesham

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beach, west, and can only be visited in a diver's outfit. Thorney Church is on an island, or what was so until recent years when a causeway was built. For centuries beyond reckoning it was doubly separated from the mainland by the waters of Great Deep and Little Deep, and the parson and those of his flock who wished to go travelling had to ford the waters at low tide or ferry them at high. To-day, except when gales and high tide come together, you can cross the Deeps by a raised embankment.

I walked to Thorney Island from Emsworth at my last visit on a day of pleasant autumnal sunshine. The first part of the journey is over land 'inned' from the sea, and by the wayside I gathered wisdom. I met a farmer who told me much I did not know of a noble breed of Thorney bullocks, and the splendid feeding qualities of the grass of the saltings. Three good things were done for Thorney, he told me, about seventy years ago. The great sea wall on the west side was built and you can see from this point of the roadway the line of the huge bulwark. At the same time more of the splendid grassland was reclaimed, some 178 acres, and then, as part of the job, the Causeway over the two Deeps was made linking the island with the mainland. Before the inning the Deeps had been wider, and the crossing at times of high water or when at low water a heavy scour was on could be a perilous undertaking. An evidence of this can be found in the parish registers where are such

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entries as 'Drown'd in the wade-way'. I left my farmer friend with an informed mind, and followed on along the pleasant brown track which is the only road of the island.

By and by the road narrowed; it meandered among trees which threw a dappled light on its brown shingly surface, then turned to the left and I passed a school where a group of comely little Saxons were at play—for I noticed that nearly all had flaxen hair and olive skins, which showed their kinship to Ella and his followers. On the left is a residence sometimes called a manor house and usually unoccupied. Of old the island was held of the manor of Bosham and Thorney was of the nature of a petty or sub-manor. We know nothing of its history in Saxon times. The name describes a land of thorns and is not an uncommon place-name. The Houses of Parliament at Westminster are on a Thorney Island as also the Abbey Church, and there is a Thorney Island among the fens of Cambridgeshire which was the last stronghold of Hereward the Wake.

Edward the Confessor, out of love for his chaplain Osbern, gave to him, on his appointment as Bishop of Exeter, the lands of Bosham, Chidham, Thorney, Apuldram and Funtington, with the churches on them for the endowment and glory of that see. The gift led to complications. It was a strange thing that a bishop of Chichester could scarce move out of the west gate of his see city without entering the liberties of his brother of Exeter, and for centuries recriminations and

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wranglings were the order. My lord of Chichester objected to a western city jostling at his gates. It was unendurable. It took centuries to adjust certain high matters of episcopal etiquette, and was, in fact, not fully done with until the sharp blow of the Reformation of the sixteenth century took place.

Beyond the school, beyond the manor house, you reach the church, and here the road moves down to the sea or at least to the Thorney channel which goes out to the sea. Just where the road shelves down I found a fisherman engaged, like those of old Galilee, mending his nets. He was a friendly sort and greeted me with a smile. 'We be of the same trade, I think, in a manner of speaking,' he said. 'Yes,' I replied, 'you're a fisherman and I'm a fisherman.'

I started fishing at once. I wanted to know all I could of the place names of the island, of the church, of the services, of the parson. He told me a great deal of these matters, also about the risks of his job. It is a treacherous inlet, this of Thorney; it has shallows, mud banks, there are swift ebbs and sometimes the scour is such that it needs strong arms and a nimble wit to deal with it. I heard also of migratory birds which reached the island, wild swan and brent geese made sometimes a sojourn and tiny gold-crests would arrive so spent and tired that he could gather them into his hands. I liked my wayside friend, the fisherman. I found also he knew the inside of the church quite well, and loved the

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services because there was some good hearty singing and no high-falutin attempts by the choir. I heard that there were no gentry in Thorney, no inn, no shops, and yet it was not deadly quiet for there was work every day to be done, things happened and even surprises occurred. It is curious that the very same description of Thorney was given in the year 1342 at an 'Inquisition' of Edward the Third, 'there be no merchantmen, those only hold the land who live upon their own land and by their own hard labour'.

The churchyard wall is at the very edge of the sea inlet. I was told that when gales sang loud lullaby against the church windows and the elms overhead beat time the parson had to shout his sermon in order to be heard.

There is a delightful wild flower, uncommon and beautiful, which, so it seems to me, favours churchyards above all places. It is English clary, a flower of richest blue. I had no sooner entered the enclosure when I met it. I might here say that the island holds ever so many botanical rarities. Close by is yellow-horned poppy, sea milkwort, sea holly, a plant with lovely veined leaves, nit grass, sea barley, sea hard grass and others worth the seeking.

The shallow waters of these inlets produced during the Roman occupation vast quantities of oysters. To-day the soil of old Regnum cannot be disturbed without turning up oyster shells. I wonder why it is that the culture now is restricted

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to two or three localities only of the British coast, and the price of these bivalves, because of their fewness, allowed to reach a height which puts them within the reach only of the very well-to-do? One of the payments the people of Thorney had to make to their lord, the Bishop of Exeter, was 700 oysters on mid-Lent Sunday. I call that making a feast of a fast day.

I hesitate to begin an account of the church. There is so much to say and I get so enamoured of architectural features and ghostly builders that I tire my readers. Yet, nearly always, the whole story of a parish is gathered up in its ancient church, and here, at Thorney, the fabric, monuments, register books and churchwardens' accounts bring back far more than anything else its faded past.

There must have been a Saxon church at Thorney; Domesday mentions a priest as resident at the time of the Confessor, but no sign of it remains. The oldest part of the present edifice is the tower, it is Transitional Norman and apparently belongs to the time of Robert Warlewast, Bishop of Exeter, 1155-1116. He was a builder and lover of noble churches, and this one, though far from the high road, dwelling apart and with a tiny flock, is a building of loveliness and charm. Of the same date as the tower are three bays of Norman arcading to be seen on the north side. Evidently the Norman church possessed an aisle on this side, and at quite early date it was removed, and the arcades and pillars, with their

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fine squared abaci, left to strengthen the wall. Here, too, is a north door with dog-tooth moulding.

The rest of the church, both nave and chancel, is all of one period, Early English, and in date about 1210. At least it was refashioned then, bits of the earlier building can be seen here and there, as, for instance, a reversed jamb-shaft in the splay of a north nave window. Since then, that is since 1210, it has been hardly touched. It remains practically unaltered since the builders left it more than seven hundred years ago. With deep lancets, the long even line of nave and chancel, it remains a rare and exquisite example of pure austere Gothic in the first age, when the style emerged from the heavy Norman. This is an unusual thing to find in our ancient churches; nearly all are affected by the changes of style which seemed almost compelling in their time, flowing lines of Decorated, vertical mullions of Perpendicular and square-headed windows of Tudor. At Thorney you enter into a church, and, except for furnishings, see it as it was in 1210.

The font is definitely Norman of 'tub' pattern with chevron and panel markings. There is visible, on the south side at junction of nave and chancel, signs of a staircase turret which must have been a handsome exterior feature of the church, breaking the long lines of roof and parapet. The newel of the circular stairway is plainly seen outside though partly hidden by a buttress. There are several medieval 'scratch'



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dials on the south side, two are on the priest's door, one on each jamb. The line for the parish mass, which was 9 a.m. on Sundays and holy-days, is clearly and firmly made, but they differ a little. It may be that one is for summer season and the other for winter. Under the wall of nave and tower are several stone coffin lids, one or two with foliated crosses and all with chamfered edges. They probably covered the remains of far-away rectors, and, it seems, were cast outside at some recent restorations and are now suffering from the weather. The ways of some modern architects are past finding out. The walls of this church are largely of water-worn beach-stones, and have borne the weathering of ages wonderfully well. They rest on a plinth of freestone, squared and tooled, probably that of the Binsted quarry in the Isle of Wight. The stone of the lost stairway leading to the rood-loft is of creamy texture and is from Caen.

Within the chancel is a small piscina, the dish cut away at the time of the Reformation, also an aumbry. Six feet above the floor is a string-course, a round filleted with hollow.

A jewel of this church is the oaken chancel screen removed at some age of stupidity to the west end, where it now stands, making a narthex. The tracery at the heads of the open panels is a delightful example of English flamboyant craftsmanship. Within the roundels the cusps are united at the centre giving the impression of a wheel in motion. Sussex has several examples of



THE NARTHEX SCREEN  
WEST THORNEY CHURCH  
NORTH SIDE SHOWING NORMAN ARCADING



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beautiful fourteenth-century screenwork, as at Eastbourne, Playden, Rodmell and those at Chichester in the Palace Chapel and the Hospital of St. Mary, but it is singular that one of the most original and exuberant bits of the period should be found in this remote place.

The nave and chancel, as we have described, belong to the first years of the thirteenth century, and that was one of the most wonderful ages of English and Continental history. It saw the rise of scholasticism, universities, parliament, municipalities; the Gothic architecture emerged from Norman, mendicant friars with a new glimpse of the Gospel went out for the re-conversion of England, Friar Bacon at Oxford heralded the New Learning. The thirteenth century was an age of inspiration, when men saw visions and it was a great thing to be alive then. Thorney Church belongs to this age of awakening. Its walls were not so grey then as they are now, there was colour, there were lights always burning, and the noble screen at the chancel step suggested to the worshippers the mysteries which dwell around the presence of God. At one side of the altar was an image of our Lord, at the other of St. Nicholas, who was especially a fisherman's saint. Day by day from the tower the people of Thorney would hear the 'Jesus' bell, for so their day bell was called, telling them that at the moment the parish priest was lifting up the consecrated elements and praying for his people, their bodies and souls. It is useful to recall within

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the quiet, austere little church of to-day this pageant of the past. The people of those ages were as much alive as those of to-day, and there is every sign by the offerings they made that it was for them a church beloved.

NOTE.—Since writing this chapter the worst has happened to Thorney Island. It has been taken over by the Royal Air Service and soon there will be much tree-felling, the fair green expanses mottled over by aerodromes and the loud buzz of aeroplanes will fill the land. All I have here written of Thorney Island must be read in the past tense.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SOME SCRATCH OR MASS DIALS

THE shadow thrown by a shepherd's crook is probably the oldest time-indicator in human history. It belongs to ages of the dawn when patriarchs moved flocks and herds over lands little tenanted, and the same meets us to-day when the southdown shepherd wants to find the time for 'nuncheon' or for folding. Thus do the very remote and the recent meet together.

But what did they do during many centuries of civilized history to meet needs more varied and more insistent than those of shepherd life? The mechanical clock which now rules our movements only came, and then slowly, into general use in Tudor times. How did rich and poor find out times for daily work, for church services and for all their goings out and comings in? There were in great houses and in great churches, sand-glasses, in ever so few, water measures. King Alfred, we are told, marked out his day by burning candles. The wanderer over wide spaces would look at the sun's rising and falling and at the procession of constellations in the night sky. Yet all this leaves us unable to understand how the needs of daily life were met for some thousands of years.

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It is likely, it is highly probable, that our forefathers in far-off ages possessed a sense we have now lost, that they possessed a time-sense. They would know by scarcely conscious effort the movement of hours. With the coming of mechanical timekeepers the need for this faculty has passed, and we know that an organ long left unused becomes atrophied, yet to this day there are many who can wake themselves when they wish at any hour of the night, and there are farm labourers who have never possessed a watch, and yet can inform you to within a few minutes the precise time of day. There is little doubt that men and women ordered their lives through many ages by a time-sense we have now lost.

It is remarkable that one of the most general means of finding the time of day for the purpose of ringing the bell and calling people to church for worship, and this for many hundreds of years, had, until a few years ago, fallen completely out of mind. Although the sight of the means for this was, on the walls of a considerable number of churches, before people's eyes, yet 'scratch' or 'mass' dials indicating at least by one bold stroke the 9 a.m. hour which was that of the Sunday parish mass, and generally the vesper hour, that is at either two or three o'clock, summer time or winter time, these were passed over, seen, and as we may put it, yet not noticed. They fell out of use in late Tudor times when clocks and watches became general, and then their meaning was forgotten. It was a member of the Downside com-

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munity, Father Ethelbert Horne, an enthusiastic archæologist who, while examining and poring closely over the churches of Somerset and Devonshire noticed the prevalence of radial lines and style holes, the general likeness they bore and the dominance of one line, that which marked approximately the shadow line at 9 a.m., discovered their meaning, that they were for indicating in a loose and near-about way the hours of church service. When thus seen it was obvious. Is it not a fact of human experience that of the thousands of things we daily gaze at we see very few!

Father Horne published, about 1914, a book, *Primitive Sun Dials*, and described over 200 examples of the West country. Ten years later Dr. Green, a medical man of Romsey, followed on the enquiry with local examples, and in his book has propounded a theory that the style or gnomon used was a bent one made to suit the orientation of the church and the incidence of the sun's movement winter and summer.

These 'scratch' dials can be found in all parts of Sussex, and they take different forms while preserving certain characteristics. You cannot go far without lighting upon them. Here I give a series of those of the Cuckmere valley, not because they are more numerous or more remarkable than others, they are merely typical, and I mention them only because, having lived near, I happen to know them.

I hardly know whether to reckon as one of the

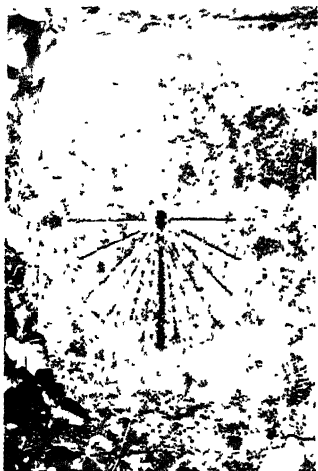


## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

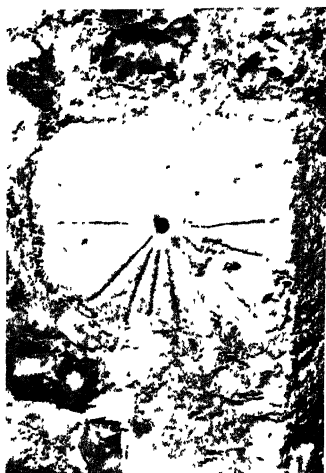
series two deep pit-marks on a stone of the porch of the first of the Cuckmere churches, West Dean. They are apparently bored for a purpose, and when I inserted a peg in the upper hole it threw, this was in the month of June, a 9-a.m. shadow, of solar time. It may be the holes are casual and unrelated, but certainly there are a few churches, and Ford and Ferring in this county are of the number, where the time of parish mass was indicated by a shadow line of two holes only.

The little church of Litlington which belongs to the next parish has several mass dials. The most conspicuous one, and a good example of a general type, is on the porch jamb but usually out of sight because of the exuberant growth of a rose tree. It is a half-circle of radiating lines, the noon line deeply cut. In this dial the stump of the iron style remains. Another scratch dial is on the north side of a tower buttress. It consists of twenty-four dots evenly arranged around the style hole. This suggests the question, why is a dial on the north and sunless side, and what is the use of hour marks for the night time? There are other occurrences of what seems a freak arrangement, and I cannot answer the question. A dial on the north side may be a latter-day displacement, that is a frequent happening, and the marks of the upper half may be the work of those who crave for symmetry.

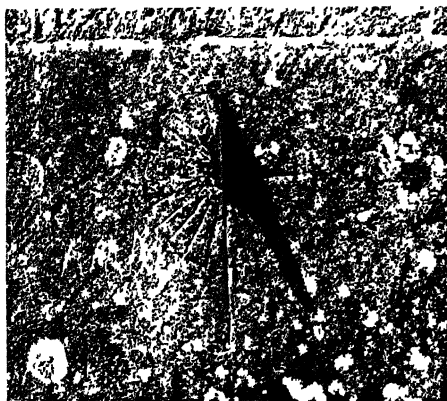
This feature of a twenty-four-hour dial meets us again at Alfriston Church just beyond Litling-



LITLINGTON CHURCH  
ON RIGHT HAND OF PORCH



WESTHAM CHURCH



ALFRISTON  
ON SOUTH PORCH

SCRATCH DIALS



## SOME SCRATCH OR MASS DIALS

ton and across the river. It is on the jamb of the south porch but here it is easy to see that the upper half is later work and a mere faint scratching. To this charming example of a medieval mass dial there has recently been added a modern bronze gnomon, an addition unpleasing and undesirable. Higher up the river, at Arlington, is one of simple and perhaps early date. It is under the set-off of a south-side buttress, and consists of a few faint lines, much weathered, marking morning hours. Hellingly Church, which stands at a fork of the river where two affluents meet, has one out of its place. It is a circle dial cut on a dark stone, a piece of iron-stone, and now upside-down on the east edge of a nave buttress.

At Alciston, a parish which touches on that of Alfriston, there are four dials of unusual interest and worth lingering over. They are all on the jamb stones of the priest's door, a name, we might explain, given to the small doorway generally found in old churches which entered direct into the chancel, and stood on the side nearest to where was the parsonage. The Alciston dials have only the morning quadrant and, as we noticed at Arlington and Hellingly, no lines for evensong. That was a service held early in the afternoon to allow time for the youth of the parish to practise archery, a duty enjoined by statute during Plantagenet and Tudor times so as to have a reserve of well-trained men when emergency of war occurred.

On the left of the priest's door at Alciston can

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

be seen a clearly cut full circle with lines of hours between 6 a.m. and noon. On the right jamb is a half-circle and only two hour lines. Below this are two dials, and it is noticeable that the 9 a.m. of one is at a slightly different angle from that of the other. This, one may venture to say, is to indicate a summer time and a winter time for service when, with the movement of the sun's point of rising, the shadow line would move. The rambler who is interested in this subject will find the scratch dials of Alciston Church of particular interest.

A few miles away, Westham Church, which lies close to the great walls of Anderida, has a well-marked half-circle dial in which the mass and vesper lines are deeply marked. At Folkington the dial has been displaced at some restoration and built upside down into a buttress. There are several churches where the same thing has happened. At Ticehurst Etchingham, Iden and Edburton dials may be found placed at any angle as the restoring builder found convenient. The church of Isfield has a dial on the south buttress where advantage has been taken of shadow cast by the edges of a broken drip-stone course. The radial lines to mark the hours have been scratched on flat faces, presumably reworked, at the fractures. There are dials to be seen at Winchelsea, Mayfield, Northiam, Chiddingly, Southwick near Shoreham, Wivelsfield and some other churches of East Sussex. At Kingston Buci is one where, instead of incised lines, are deep

## SOME SCRATCH OR MASS DIALS

grooves with terminal dots. Edburton, in addition to the lop-sided one mentioned, has two in proper position on the south porch.

There are a considerable number of these ancient time-markers also in West Sussex, and I will mention only a few. Within a short distance of Chichester are several of some interest. The most remarkable, and like none other in the county, is at Apuldram. It is within the porch, and the hour lines will be found cut on the sill stone of a narrow aperture looking south-east. The curious feature of this dial is that the jamb stones are made to serve the purpose of gnomon, and the shadow lines cast are from 9 a.m. to noon. Apuldram Church was for several centuries a chapel of the collegiate church of Bosham, a building whose story begins at the twilight edge of the Saxon settlement. Bosham has a noticeable dial on a stone of the chancel buttress. The church on the lonely island of Thorney has four, two of these are on the jamb stones of the priest's door and apparently intended for summer and winter time. At Warblington, which is just over the Sussex border, there is one where a portion of the style remains. East of Chichester are three churches, with examples of interest, Boxgrove, Oving and Aldingbourne. Boxgrove has two dials together, the upper one, within a circle, has but one line, that for 9 a.m.; the other is elaborate, it consists of the twelve day lines enclosed within a double circle well drawn and deeply cut. The space between the two circles has hour numbers

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in Arabic numerals. This is the only mass dial I have met giving any indication of date. Arabic numerals came into use in this country about the middle of the fifteenth century, so this dial must have been scratched at some time after 1450. There is a similar one at Oving on the side of the priest's door though not so well finished as that at Boxgrove and without numerals. At Aldingbourne is a large, much-weathered twenty-four-hours 'wheel' of lines and dots and without circle. Clymping Church has ten or more cut on the south face of its Norman tower, of different types, and it is likely, of different dates. The pre-Norman church of Ford also has three or four. There are scratch dials at Poling, Rustington, Felpham, Tarring, North and South Stoke. At Stopham, on a sill-stone of a south nave window, are two close together, one, showing hour lines of the morning and the other a single mass line within a semi-circle. Lurgashall has two on the tower, one facing east and one south.

Within two miles of the east gate of Chichester is Westhamptnett with a church as old as any in Sussex, for its beginnings seem to follow close on the years of St. Wilfrid. On a tower buttress is a medieval dial recently brought to light after centuries of burial under a coating of mortar. It marks the hours from 6 a.m. till noon.

There is a spice of romance in the story of one. We do not expect to find scratch dials on the sea beach and washed by tidal waters. A member of the Littlehampton Natural History Society, when



ON LEFT OF PRIESTS' DOOR



ON RIGHT OF PRIESTS' DOOR  
BLOCKED (A)



ON RIGHT OF PRIESTS' DOOR  
BLOCK BELOW SINGLE DIAL (A)

SCRATCH DIALS  
ALCISTON CHURCH





## SOME SCRATCH OR MASS DIALS

recently on the shore at Atherington, noticed on a large breakwater, the Black Horse, a weather-worn stone having deeply cut one of the signs commonly called 'pilgrims' crosses', this one of double-armed type with terminal dots. It was clearly of the medieval period. Close to it was a small scratch dial. How could a stone with such markings get there? There is an explanation which has likelihood. The breakwater is not far from the parish of Cudlowe, all of which, except for a few acres, is now out at sea. Half a mile or more beyond low water lie the church with a group of cottages and farmsteads. The same fate in more recent times, that is within the nineteenth century, has befallen the neighbouring parish church and hamlet of Middleton. The stone may be from one of these churches found on the beach and utilized by workmen.

Lord Moyne, who owns Bailliff's Court, a property close by, and has restored and brought back to some of its ancient beauty the Grange Chapel, all which, we may say, manor, court and chapel, had been held up to 1414 by the Abbey of Seez, has had the stone with its medieval markings removed and built into the south-east coign of the chapel. The scratch dial is not perfect. A deep groove, possibly due to weathering, has eaten away the central part, and at a subsequent time the radiating lines were renewed. The terminal dots which are on the original surface of the stone are intact.

I have purposely left out in this account of early

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

dials the well-known one above the porch entrance of Bishopstone Church and with name 'Eadric' as maker on it. This is in another category and belongs to the small group of undoubted Saxon dials, and in the line of those of Escombe, Kirkdale and the Bewcastle Cross.

It is likely that the class of scratch dial here described came into use soon after the Norman conquest and continued until the mechanical clock became general. It seems singular that in all the mass of literature from the eleventh till the sixteenth centuries scarce any reference occurs to any means of time measuring and marking for the needs of daily life. Several questions occur. What did they do to determine time on sunless days which are so frequent in our land? How was the time for night services in conventual and monastic churches arrived at? What of the ringing of the 'morrow-mass' bell, a bell at dawn or just before, which gave in many areas of town and country the time when men went forth to their work and labour? The bell for angelus, evensong and curfew were important time signals for the whole community. The Bible and Shakespeare speak of cockcrow, but 'the bird of dawning' is a creature of erratic impulse and is known to give his shrill warning at any hour of the night. It may be that the use of candles, cressets and sand-glasses was more general than we are aware of, but references to these hardly exist.

Clocks did not become general until the age of Elizabeth, though in a few large churches as

## SOME SCRATCH OR MASS DIALS

St. Paul's Cathedral and Glastonbury Abbey we read of them in use in the last years of the thirteenth century. The scratch dial found on so many village churches, often made apparently with a pocket-knife or whittle, served to give a near-about time to the parish clerk, telling him when to ring the bell for service through hundreds of years, and to-day for the intelligent rambler forms a pleasant by-path of study.

## CHAPTER XXII

### BY THE ADUR RIVER

I GOT out of the motor bus near Lancing at the Sussex Pad Inn. That is a name suggestive of the eighteenth century—lonely roads, dark nights, smugglers, highwaymen and hangings. It is just across the river that the event occurred, the hanging and gibbeting of a misguided youth, which gave rise to Tennyson's well-known poem, 'Rizpah', with its echo of the sound of a creaking chain in the night wind and the wailing of a woman's voice. However, the sun is bright to-day, the Downs look fair, also, I live in the twentieth century, and at the moment the river Adur is at its flood, and is as noble a sight as Sussex can give.

This river is only called the Adur by the blunder of a learned man, who misread a Roman Itinerary of Britain. That was in 1607, and map makers—Moll, Budgen and Price—each copying Camden and copying each other, completed the confusion. Of old it was the 'waters of the Sore'. Shoreham, that is Old Shoreham, was the 'ham by the Sore'. Later, when a castle was built higher up on one side and on the other side Portus Cuthmani gathered a traffic of pilgrims, merchants and soldiers, it was, and for centuries was, the Beeding river. It is a curious fact that every

## BY THE ADUR RIVER

river along the coast of Sussex has lost its first and most expressive title. The Arun was, of old, the Tarrant; the Ouse, which is only a generic term, the Midwynde, or mid-waters of the county; the West Bourne, on the Hampshire border, is now gradually acquiring the name of Ems; the Ashbourne is now marked on the map as Old Haven; the Asten has dwindled to a ditch and is a name forgotten; the Rother, at the Kent corner, was, long ago, the Lymn.

The Footpad Inn recalls a story I read in a newspaper of 1771 (*The Lewes Advertiser*) concerned with this district, and it is worth telling. 'On Wednesday night last, a little after 5 o'clock, as Mrs. Herring was riding along, a footpad took hold of her horse's bridle, and said he must have her money; she assured him he should not, whereupon he swore he would knock her off the horse with the long bat he carried, if she did not hand out her purse in a hurry. She then consented, but told him that he must untie the string of her safeguard before she could get it out, in the doing of which he let the bridle loose. She then gave the horse a cut with her whip and got clean off. He was a tall man with a dark face and a blue coat.'

I am out for the day. I intend to walk up the west side of the Adur as far as Beeding bridge, then find my way back along the eastern side of the waters. I know I shall see a great many things—far more than I have time and space to enter here. But then every day of our life, if

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only we are awake, is a crowded affair; concrete facts, impressions, musings, dreams, come to us innumerable, and when, in memory, we look back it is only the mountain-tops, or little else, that we recall.

I do not call the Adur a greatly winding river. There are no sinuosities such as we see at the Cuckmere, and wide coursings as on the Arun; it just moves with a slight wavering up to Beeding, and farther on to Knepp Castle. The walk is not a considerable one on a long summer's day. Moreover, I am only going to skim the story of the walk, for every bend of the road shows something worth telling.

In days which are now very distant the river was wider, and had a fullness at floodtide even greater than it is now; it had wharves along its edges for fisher-folk and sailor-folk, and Domesday Book mentions salt pans, and gives hints of tons and hams which, except for a few names, have entirely vanished. Rivers were the first of the highways of our land.

This road was but a lane when I first knew it, narrow, with high hedges, and many birds, and you rarely met any vehicles but those of the farm. Now the County Surveyor has taken it in hand for the comfort of motorists, and I do not thank him. Still, the world was not made solely for my benefit, and I know there are many who, within the cushioned confines of a car, love as much as I do twisting lanes, surprise views and high hedges.

## BY THE ADUR RIVER

I never pass this portion of the Downs without wondering at the gigantic pile of Lancing College Chapel. I do so to-day, for it stands like a creature instinct with life against the blue of the sky and the green of the hills. A noble building such as this has a spiritual quality, an aura; it glows with personality. Farther on a sedge warbler met me, and in a raucous voice challenged my right to the road. He followed me in this scolding fashion ever so far up. This is a frequent way of the sedge warbler; he has no high opinion of human folk, and suspects we are in search of his mate, his eggs or his offspring.

After two miles among hedges which are still allowed to grow high, and intervals of bare, jutting banks, I reached a village, or, I should say, a hamlet, with a little grey church nestling in a goffered recess of the hill. It is Coombes.

As regards its size, Coombes is not a village; it is scarce a hamlet so diminutive does it appear, and yet, like many another tiny settlement, it is as old as English history. Coombes is mentioned in a Saxon charter of Eadred, it is mentioned in Domesday, the name occurs again and again all down the centuries. 'Men may come and men may go', but here it continues in a hollow of the hills nestling with its little mother, the church, under groups of tall elms. Near by is the parsonage, a fifteenth-century timbered building with sill beam, porch and a roof filigreed with old gold. It is now a labourer's cottage. You must go there to get the key, and in doing so will get a



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glimpse of a garden gay with flowers of the sort you would have found in Tudor days.

You pass into the churchyard by a tapsel gate, a gate which swings on a central pivot and which is peculiar to Sussex. There are tapsel gates at Friston, East Dean, Jevington and Kingston near Lewes, also, I dare say, at a few other places. The church is very old, for there are features of Norman work; it is reduced in size to suit its shrunken flock; the air is stagnant within, for the building is kept locked. When more folk dwelt here, when the woollen industry was rising, bringing wealth to the farm, when, at the Adur side, there were wharves for fisher-folk and sailor-folk, the church was loved and cared for. You see signs of this in memorials on the walls of squires and yeomen, in bits remaining of old stained glass, and in the records of offerings made for lights perpetual to burn and keep bright the sanctuary. At the parsonage a parson dwelt. There is a list of these extant from the year 1220 downward. His life was not an idle one, for day by day he was under obligation to ring a bell morning and evening and let the parish know he was at prayer inside remembering all estates of men: the ploughman, the shepherd, the housewife, the fisherman. To-day the church looks wan, cold, a place little heeded; its 'perpetual' lights have gone out and its colouring departed. Once a week, I believe, on Sunday afternoon, a priest from Lancing hurries over and conducts a service for two or three and hurries back.

## BY THE ADUR RIVER

Now here let a quite humble country parson make what may seem an audacious suggestion. There are scores of retired clergymen, there may be a hundred in Sussex, who have given up benefices because they had become too hard and exacting and yet love to have a place to pray in, a few souls to care for, and some children to talk to. There are beautiful backwaters like Coombes, like its next neighbour St. Botolph's, like many another of dear lost churches, little fanes, little flocks, little stipends but stipends swelling the meagre allowance of the Pension Board and giving a bit of happy work for the last years of life. When a church is daily used I have noticed it takes on a new appearance; it is alive, it radiates something, the depressed interior and the dank air goes. I believe there is many an aged priest, tired but not worn out, who would prefer a home and ministry out here to the back streets of a Sussex watering town.

It was now hot with the glow of noontide sun, and the white road, wandering and twisting, gives me at each bend a glimpse of lonely hills on one side and criss-crossed water meadows on the other. In these is the 'oat grass, and the sword grass, and the bulrush in the pool'. I could hear the pleasant pipings for a mile or more of a reed warbler, but bird music grows silent as day advances. All bird-lovers know that it is at twilight times, at 'the outgoings of the morning and evening', that their voices are fullest and richest.

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

St. Botolph's Church is within a mile of Coombes, but unlike that it stands out bare on the saltings of the estuary. It is a delight to enter this little building, for the door is open, windows are open and fresh air is allowed to pass through it; also it is lovingly cared for.

Like Coombes it has shrunk in size, it has lost its north aisle, and you can see pillars and arcading of the thirteenth century buried in the wall. The rest of the nave walls belong to a period before the Norman Conquest; the corbels of the chancel arch have rude chip marks of the Saxon pick and are worth looking at. There is a Jacobean pulpit with tester and an oaken door with churchwarden's initials and a date of 1630. The old name of the parish was that of its single manor, Annington, but gradually the name of the church ousted that of its Saxon settlers and now it is known only as St. Botolph's. The parsonage, forsaken by the parson, is by its side, trim, neat and with well-ordered garden. Several packways from the hills descend here, and somewhere was a bridge crossing, now long lost, with a chapel known as 'St. Peter of the Old Bridge'.

From St. Botolph's I passed on. On one side were salt marshes, on the other aged walls which once surrounded the manor house of Annington, and enclose now only some lingering bits of it. This is a land of faded glories. There are names about which betoken this. Applesham, Erringham, Bidlington, Tottington and Maudlin are title words of places and families which suggest

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a splendid and coloured past, and now they describe only some broken remnants of buildings.

The sun had passed high noon, the winding road shimmered white and dusty, and when I left the walls of Annington behind me I became acutely conscious of feeling hungry. There was a bank of bare Down edging the road-side, and here I sat down to a sumptuous repast of bread, cheese and an apple.

A child came along—a dainty lassie, neatly dressed, as to-day cottage children nearly always are. She was returning to school, and carried in her hand a bunch of bee orchids; far too many, I thought, of a flower so choice and infrequent.

‘My dear,’ I said, ‘those are quite interesting flowers. Where did you find them?’

‘I know where they grow, but I won’t tell you. Teacher said that when we found beautiful and rare flowers we were not to tell everybody.’

‘I am not everybody, but your teacher is, I can see, a wise woman. But why did you pick so many?’

My damsel was silent at this. Then she said just what I expected her to say: ‘If I had not picked them someone else would. I got there first.’

That is just the sort of answer you get from hosts of unthinking people, who go out and gather with wastefulness the treasures of wood and field.

‘I think I will go and see your teacher and say, “I consider your children are gathering far too

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many precious little flowers; just look at that girl with the bunch of bee orchises!’”

Then the child behaved artfully and prettily. ‘Don’t do that, and I will give you a nice little buttonhole.’

At once she made a spray of three orchids and set them off with a sprig of wood sorrel and then pinned them on my jacket flap. So I was appeased, and I further learned that Mother Eve has some wise little daughters in the world.

Thus adorned, I went on my way. Soon I reached a turning right and left, one going to Steyning, the other to Bramber. Steyning was not in my quest. It is a place which deserves more than the slight reference of a day’s long ramble. Its roots lie deep in Sussex history, but it may be said to have stepped into the light because a happy-hearted and altogether winsome saint arrived here trundling his old mother along in a frail wicker wheelbarrow, which, providentially for Steyning folks, hopelessly broke down. He at first was called ‘silly-head’, and laughed at; then they learnt to love him, seek him, confide in him, and to-day his memory is fragrant. So God in every age calls the weak ones of earth, yea, and the foolish ones, to confound the wise and the mighty.

Bramber Castle is on the left. It is a knoll of grey chalk, rising high above the Adur waters; a deep and broad fosse surrounds it, and in the centre is a mound which is probably a motte thrown up by the first Norman lord, William de

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Braose, when he took possession. This family held the castle and wide lands around for more than four centuries. They were a fighting race, vigorous in battle and no less forward in care for the souls of their people. The first of them, William, re-built the Church of St. Nicholas for the fishermen of (Old) Shoreham. It still stands practically as he left it. He also founded a priory near the castle, 'att Sele', where prayers perpetual should be maintained for the welfare of his soul, his parents' souls and the souls of all Christian people. His son Philip reared with magnitude and beauty the church of New Shoreham, St. Mary-of-the-Harbour. This was probably a thank-offering for his safe return from the First Crusade. His son, William II., helped by his mother, set up a house between castle and bridge for Knights Templars. He no doubt remembered the exploits of his father, who was one of those who beat a way into Jerusalem. When the Order of Knights Templars was suppressed this house, with its endowments, became a hospital for lepers, and continued a work of mercy until the Dissolution of 1535, when it came into the Crown lands. You see, what is among the fairest things of Bramber to-day, this lost hospital of 'St. Mary's', a building beautifully timbered, of the close upright type indicating a date of about 1450. It stands on the right near to the old course of the river.

I did not enter the castle to-day. It has become a glorified tea garden. It is from recollections of earlier visits I give these particulars.

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The church of Bramber, like that of Old Shoreham, is dedicated to St. Nicholas, a sailor's saint. It stands on a high bank above the road and seems to hug closely the eastern edge of the castle wall. It was built by William, the first of the Norman lords of Bramber. It seemed at first to my eyes an architectural puzzle, a building unshapen and showing wounds of many strange loppings. The puzzle became resolved when we remembered that it was originally built cruciform, small from the first but having the dignity of transepts, central tower and a noble sanctuary; what now remains is only the nave showing vestiges of its lost portions. Within, on a pier capital, is some grotesque sculpture, a fox making off with a goose and some scenes of the chase. This is among the very few bits of early figure stone-craft in the county. The others, so far as I can remember, are the panels in Chichester Cathedral, the remarkable carving in Jevington Church and the well-known work in that of Seaford.

Norman barons were often ambitious to shine not only on the battle-field and in royal courts, but also in things purely spiritual. William de Braose, in building what was in its first completeness a small but exquisite church, wanted to lord it over Steyning. Now Steyning Church held the bones of Cuthman, and the fragrance of the life of that good man drew many pilgrims and many offerings to his shrine, so that there was kept there a college of clerks to sing through the night as well as through the day the glory of

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God and the praises of His saint. William Braose in a spirit of jealousy or of vainglory outraged ecclesiastical order. Bramber was part of the parish of Steyning and of the patrimony of Cuthman, but William turned his castle chapel into what he called a parish church; also he provided it with dean and clerks to sing and pray through day and night, although they had no holy man's bones to watch and cherish. This at once brought on high contentions. Steyning, both priests and people, would not tolerate it. So the matter was brought before the Conqueror in 1086. The King was always deeply interested in Church affairs and I think rather enjoyed adjudicating. That was not often, such cases usually went to Rome.

He gave his decision in favour of Steyning, and a consequence was that the bodies of Bramber folk who had been buried in the ground around St. Nicholas had to be disinterred and carried off to St. Cuthman; also the dean had to hand over to his rival the fees he had received for marriages and mortuaries. However, by 1096 the chapel of Bramber obtained parochial status, and as by this time a priory was established and licensed, William Braose was probably satisfied.

Bramber bridge does not deserve to be looked at closely. It is an erection of last century and has no marks on it of inspiration. It replaces one built by the monks of Sele. In those days it was accounted a thing of praise to God to build a bridge nobly and help wayfarers of whatever class



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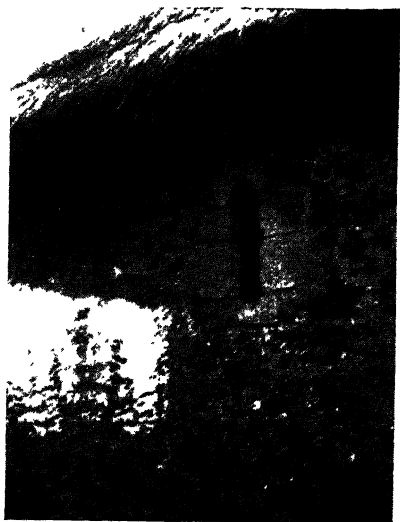
who came to the water's edge. St. Swithun, it should be remembered, was held in love and honour not only because he itinerated, a footsore bishop, the wide lands of Wessex, but because he spent almost all the money he could get to build bridges. The prior and monks of Sele were an ill-endowed lot, driven whether they liked it or not to live in holy poverty, but they found means somehow to build a many-spanned bridge over river and marsh, and on it, over the central cut-way, to erect a little chapel—just such a one as you see to-day, lingering in beauty, at Wakefield and Rotherham—where travellers could pause for a moment and thank God for a dry crossing.

The chapel of Sele Priory served also as the parish church of Beeding. It is called Upper to distinguish it from a sundered portion some miles away in the Weald called Lower. These names go by a law of contraries, for Lower Beeding is on higher ground than Upper, and is 'up country'.

All through its history Sele Priory was but a small community, never exceeding eight monks, and these, because of its scanty income, compelled to a life of careful poverty. It dwindled in numbers, got into debt and by 1480 flickered out. On the solicitation of Bishop Waynflete its small endowments went to swell those of Magdalen College, Oxford. The Cartulary of the Priory, which is in the library of that college, has been transcribed and edited by L. F. Salzman, and it is a document of warm human interest, giving the



BEEDING  
A BIT OF THE LOST  
PRIORY OF SELE



OLD ERRINGHAM  
CHAPEL  
A NORMAN WINDOW



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story of passing priors, of litigation that beset them, shifts they were reduced to and, alas, of their sorry lapses and failures.

Over the bridge, up a lane to the left, you reach Beeding Church which, or its predecessor, formed also the chapel of the priory. It suffered a devastating restoration in 1853; just a fair twin-light window in the south chancel wall and a few other bits survive of the past. The conventual buildings have entirely disappeared.

The road from Beeding to Shoreham is devoid of interest. Beauty and romance dwell on the other side of the river, for there you will find a wriggling roadway giving new vistas at each turn, and unspoilt hedges; there are also old cottages and old walls, which look friendly and have personality. The Beeding to Shoreham road has been straightened out and so much widened that the pathway is absorbed, and the pedestrian must walk facing destruction. I negotiated the whole length in great discomfort and was pleased to be alive at the end of it.

The one thing along this road which assails the eye is huge lime and cement works. There are high chimneys and glowing furnaces. Part of the Downside has been deeply bitten into and shows along the valley a hollow of gleaming white. There are workmen's cottages, well built and commodious, but looking inexpressibly dull and dreary in their sameness, for each one is like the other one, and all are alien to the spot. It is my well-considered opinion that architects who can

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design cottages to blend with country surroundings are exceedingly few—one can doubt if they exist. The modern house architect cannot get his mind away from the suburbs and the town street.

Yet I made a discovery. I found one small bit on this desolate road which has links with Norman England and looked out once on a fair land before it became commercialized—years when men lived quietly and accounted clear air and sweet sunshine great riches. It is Old Erringham. You reach it by passing through a gate to the left, just beyond the cement works, and going up a farm lane. There is a New Erringham, which also is old, a mile away in the heart of the Downs. Old Erringham is the name of a Saxon homestead, and is mentioned in Domesday Book. What you see now is a pleasant building of Tudor date built of flint and brick, and there are deep breaches of open fireplaces in the side walls, and well-fashioned chimneys above the roof. The Elizabethan workman loved to make chimneys things of beauty. The house now serves for three cottages.

But it was not this which spoke to me in ghostly language of the past, but an outbuilding close by. It serves to-day as a stable and farm store, and its walls and doorways are marked by the rough wear of useful toil. It is the chapel of the first lords of Erringham and bears signs of Norman beginnings. It is quite small, as one would expect of a domestic chapel—eighteen feet

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by twelve; the walls are thick; at the east end are traces of a two-light window with mullion; on the north side of the altar site is a stone bracket which, in the wont of such buildings, would support an image of Our Lord or of the dedication saint; north and south are deep, narrow windows with jambs in part removed, but those which are left have the slight splay which betoken an early Norman date. The roof timbers are interesting. There are two tie beams with king-posts and struts; the rafters have no ridge piece but are dovetailed together, which also is a sign of early ancestry; and all—beams, rafters and purlins—have the rough cuttings of the adze, which was one of the chief tools of the medieval carpenter.

' In my wanderings I find it often the case that the chapel survives when all else of an ancient homestead has been swept away. At Bailiff's Court, where the monks' grange has completely gone, the chapel remains, and has now been restored to its ancient loveliness by Lord Moyne; at Horns Place near Appledore a chapel of St. Catherine exists of exquisite but desolate beauty.

Some of my readers may reckon me as foolishly fanciful that I find in a building like this of Erringham, and of others, where once, and through centuries, prayers and praises were made and God was sought, something lingers: call it an aura or what you will, the grey stones exhale their past. In Thomas Malory's tales he tells more than once of the knight who finds a wayside shrine

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broken and forsaken. He enters and kneels at the place where once stood the altar and there comes to him a sense of consolation and a whisper for his guidance, and he goes out spiritually dight for his errand.

A wild verbena called vervein grows about the chapel in great abundance. I would not call it a common flower in Sussex. It is a small plant with branched spikes which bear tiny flowers of a pale lilac hue. This is one of the plants of mystic fame and legendary history. It was held in high honour by the Romans of pagan times, carried in processions, offered in sacrifice and given to ambassadors when sent on important missions. In our own land an early name was holy-herb, and the rule was to gather it only after making the sign of the cross.

Hallowed be thou, Vervein,  
As thou growest on the ground,  
For in the Mount of Calvary  
There thou wast first found.  
Thou healedst our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
And staunchedst His bleeding wound;  
In the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghost,  
I take thee from the ground.

However, the old apothecary, Gerard, for whom it is just a simpler's joy, writes: 'Manie old wives fables are written of vervayne tending to witchcraft and sorcerie, which you may read elsewhere, for I am not willing to trouble your eare with such trifles.'

While standing among the vervein and looking

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at other herbs of grace which grow there, a butterfly came joyously by and settled on some couch grass. It was the Marbled White. It is not a rare creature, but I love its staid markings: a motley of grey and black. Also it recalled wanderings in my old parish among the Downs, for there were one or two places where, during July and August, I nearly always found it. The 'Horseshoe' at Old Belle Tout was one, and the gorse near the sea brow of Crowlink was another. God made butterflies, I like to think, as a rebuke to utilitarians, those dismal people who first ask about fair and lovely things: 'What good is it?' They would reckon the value of sweetness and light in terms of pounds, shillings and pence. There are a few people who simply cannot enjoy music, green fields, the deep silence of the night and the suggestive words of noble literature, because they are so possessed with ideas of usefulness and the winning of money. I would maintain that God made butterflies and gave glowing sunsets, the chant of the sea, the exquisite charm of little children, also of puppies, kittens and feathered fowls, as a rebuke to the commercially minded and all flint-faced people.

It is little more than a mile from Erringham to Old Shoreham, and there my long day's tramp ended. I was tired and hungry, and found a place of comfort at an inn where was well-brewed tea and well-buttered toast. I did not visit Old Shoreham Church, for by this time I had had enough of gazing at old stones; besides, I have



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sung the praises of the fabric elsewhere. I have an affectionate regard for this parish for another reason. From 1856 till 1878 it had, as vicar, John Bowling Mozley, a Tractarian, one of the famous Oriel College group, whose writings have insight, robustness and a rare grace of style. To me, two of his works have been among the most fertilizing and thought-provoking in my many years of much reading. These are *Ruling Ideas in Early Ages*, and the Bampton Lectures of 1865. They are the rare kind of books which give you eyes to see afresh, and make old and familiar facts look new and strange. They emanated from Old Shoreham Vicarage, and that deserves to be remembered to the glory of Sussex.

Has any spot in all the county been more often painted by wandering artists and more often shown on the walls of the Royal Academy than Old Shoreham with its low Norman tower, its nestling cottages, the river and the timbered bridge? Whether it will continue as a picture of ancient peace and beauty may now be doubted, for new buildings of a blatant and aggressive type have crept up close. Perhaps I ought not to grumble; population grows, people must live somewhere, and builders must earn a living. But there seems too many of the latter and they are too clamorous. I wish we could ship off a large number of them to the South Sea Islands and other places of the world where they could build desirable villas for natives.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### MASCOTS AND LUCK-BRINGERS

I WAS travelling along the dullest of dull roads—that between the Adur cement works and Old Shoreham—when, at a slight bend, I saw a small lop-sided motor car, and by it, sitting on a bank, a lady looking placid and quite resigned.

‘No, it’s nothing that matters,’ she replied, when I had asked what had happened. ‘The axle-tree, I believe, has broken and my Austin-seven has gracefully tilted me on to the road-side.’

Then she added the surprising information, ‘It’s all because I have come out without Saint Christopher. I ought never to go out without Saint Christopher.’

I suppose I looked a little bewildered, for I found it difficult to associate this very modern young lady, who looked so sure of herself, with a legendary saint of the misty past; they seemed very wide apart.

‘No, I’m not religious, if that is in your mind; I gave up that sort of thing years and years ago. I consider myself outgrown of all superstitions, but a gipsy witch once told me never to go motor-ing without carrying Saint Christopher as a mascot. “He’s not for everybody”, so she told me, but he’s for me, and now look at this mess. It proves what she said.’

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I did not know what to say to this and she read my mind.

‘I dare say you will think me superstitious after all, but the fact is I have great faith in gipsies. They are a primitive race, they see things we do not see, and hold secrets they will never tell to the Gentiles.’

Her talk reminded me of the well-known poem of Matthew Arnold about the scholar who forsook the halls of Oxford to follow gipsies and learn, if he could, their hidden lore, but neither Matthew Arnold nor Glanville, from whose book he took the story, mention whether the scholar gipsy gained this knowledge, or whether—as was likely—he remained to the end an alien among mysterious people.

I knew nothing of the value of mascots as luck-bringers, but I ventured to ask how it came about that she had omitted to bring with her this marvellous companion.

‘It’s my husband’s fault,’ she replied. ‘You know, he’s one of the best of men, but at times he is silly-headed like most men, and can be dreadfully obstinate. He allows himself to make a joke of my pet beliefs, and what has happened is that he took off Saint Christopher—I mean the badge of him on the bonnet—because he said it wanted straightening out after some knocks and twistings it had received, and then forgot to put it back. That’s just like him, though I will say he’s the best man in the world.’

Of course, as in duty bound, I was sympathetic and expressed my concern at the mishap.

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‘Oh, it’s quite all right, or soon will be; I’ve got through a message to some motor fitters at Shoreham and they will soon be here.’

Then we drifted to other matters. I was glad of an excuse for a rest after my long walk. Also I ought to say my companion was one out of the usual orbit and saw things from other angles than I am used to. That can be refreshing.

‘You see this pendant?’ she asked, pointing to a bunch of stones or jewels hanging at her breast. ‘I never go out without these. I’ve only six, there should be seven. I am short of a lapis lazuli. Lapis lazuli is a sure thing, you know, to keep off infectious and nasty things you might catch in a train, or a bus, or anywhere. I am hoping that some day one of my friends will give me this, to complete what I call the “sacramental seven”.’

‘It is cheap to buy,’ I said. ‘I often see it in shop windows at a few shillings.’

But she checked me.

‘Don’t you know you must never buy these things, or they will have no virtue or influence. Stones, to exert their hidden powers, must be gifts, and gifts only which express affection.’

I did not know this, in fact I was moving in an area of ideas like one in an unknown land.

She continued, ‘The same stones are not for everybody; it’s a matter of temperament as to the choice of proper stones to carry, and of ancestry and conditions of birth. That is how the Wise

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Woman I told you about put it. Now, for instance, here is an emerald. Emerald is for most people a dangerous jewel to carry, it would bring ill-luck and disaster, but it's all right for me; it gives me judgment when driving, and a quick road sense. I would never think of going out without my emerald. Here is a moonstone; that protects all travellers alike, and is safe for all. This is amber, that's for mothers; it means healthy, happy children. Jasper will give you long life. Ah, me, a doubtful boon. Ruby is for love; it keeps your loved one faithful to you, and what is life without love? And here's a swastika of beaten gold, it is the oldest and most potent of charms; it's at the back of all the others. It begins at the beginning of human history. Now all I want is lapis lazuli to complete my set, and then I can face the world.'

I ventured to say that I knew something other than jewels with which to face the world, more tender, gracious and comforting, but I think I spoke in an unknown tongue. She was, so she informed me, emancipated from the beliefs of her childhood and had entered a wider world. It seemed to me she had given up the old Faith and drifted into the wildest and silliest of credulities.

By this time a lorry arrived fitted with a crane, so I took leave of my friend of an hour.

Going into Shoreham that afternoon I met a Salvation Army lassie. Within the poke bonnet I saw a face quiet and at rest, and eyes which at some great moment had caught sight of the King

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in His beauty. Some experiences in life can never be forgotten, can never be lost; they are ineffaceable. This is a mystic language, I know, but it describes a real thing. I believe my lassie held all the jewels.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A SHRINE OF ENGLISH SCULPTURE

IT was May time and I reached Withyham on a day of glowing warmth. The motor bus from Tunbridge Wells put me down at the edge of a triangle of green whereon was a swinging sign of a White Horse rampant—at least that is what the guide book said was the creature pawing the air. I thought it resembled a White Horse insane. The inn is styled the 'Dorset Arms'. It is gable-fronted, has hung tiles, a brick porch and a stone bench, and suggests, what it probably is, a hostelry of Tudor beginnings.

I asked the polite bus conductor the way to the parish church, and he waved his arm towards a leafy lane on the left. I was misled; the parish church of Withyham is easily reached by a foot-path close to where I dismounted, but as it lies beyond two fields and is just out of sight from the highway my polite bus conductor proved a blind guide. Yet I am not sorry I went astray, for my lane gave me glimpses of a bit of Sussex I had never seen before—field, copse and glorious hedgerows. After about a mile of this I asked a roadman who was throwing flints about how much farther was the church. I found he loved a joke. He surveyed me well and said, 'Why, man,

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bless yu, yu be going wi' your back towards it! It's twenty-five thousand miles the way yu be going—that's if the school books are to be trusted, but if yu'll just turn round yu'll find it about a mile!' I did not turn round, however, for a blue-eyed, flaxen-haired damsel came along. She was ten years old, she said, and looked as a little Saxon girl might have looked in this land a thousand years ago. I gathered from a short conversation I had that she was mother's great help and father's joy.

She it was—my damsel of ten years—who put me on the way I should go. It was a path which crossed a stream by a footbridge and then entered a wood. Here was faint scent of pines, sanicle and lingering moschatel, and the hot sunshine came in shafts which threw dappled light on the sandy floor. The path moved upward for nearly a mile, a part of its course cut through dark brown sandstone, and terminated at a wicket gate which entered the churchyard of Withyham at its north-east corner.

I have found in my perambulations that when you wish to know anything of the past history of a district you must go to the parish church. Great houses have nearly all been altered and re-altered to suit moods and passing fashion of styles; of cottages, few are older than the times of Queen Elizabeth, but in many—indeed in most cases with Sussex churches—the imprint of years goes back to Norman centuries, and there are gathered the story of great families of the neighbourhood which have come and gone.



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However, I must add that Withyham Church has no links with Norman years and few with those immediately after. In 1663, the old church was struck by lightning and was so severely damaged by this and a fire which followed that it was necessary entirely to rebuild it in 1672. There are vestiges of the earlier building in the lower stages of the tower at the west end, and some bits of toolwork in sedilia and piscina at the east end. Now the seventeenth century was not an age of inspiration in matters architectural, and the attempt at Gothic revival is rather clumsy. The minds of the masons in their work seemed to seesaw between a past style they knew little about and a present one they were familiar with. Yet I like Withyham Church; it is loved, it is cared for, and is a sort of place which helps one to worship.

The glory of Withyham Church and what makes it to-day a place of pilgrimage for art lovers is the north-east chapel—the ‘Dorset Chapel’—where lie several generations of the Sackvilles. Here are gathered pieces of memorial sculpture by leading workers of the seventeenth, eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—Cibber, Nollekins, Flaxman and Chantrey—and they show in style and manner of work the moods and artistic influence of their times. Mrs. Arundel Esdaile, whose book, *English Sculpture since the Renaissance*, is a leading and authoritative work, says of this chapel, ‘It is an epitome of the history and development of English sculpture’.

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Medieval effigies were nearly always recumbent and have arms crossed or hands together in an attitude of prayer. These figures on their bed of stone speak of penitence and hope, a waiting upon God. The post-Reformation years mark a change in the character of monumental work. It is more emotional, dramatic, and largely occupied with the greatness, dignity and achievements of the subject. Effigies become standing or half recumbent: the statesman is posed with arms outstretched as when addressing the senate; judges are shown delivering judgment; the warrior stands among guns; the wife is ministering to her children; the scientist 'voyaging into seas unknown'. There is in these pose and dramatic gesture. Later, with the influence of a neo-classical school which came and dominated stone carving of the second half of the eighteenth century, we reach symbolic imagery—the urn, much drapery, virtues typified as drooping figures and little boys shedding marble tears. This emotional drift is well shown in the Dorset Chapel. On the wall of the north side is a panel to the third Duke of Dorset (1745-1799), by Nollekins; two cherubs wreath a medallion portrait with flowers, and do it rather charmingly. Close by is a memorial to the Duchess Arabella who died in 1825, by Sir Francis Chantrey, thoroughly Hellenic in its style and composition. Next to it is a work by Flaxman to George, the fourth duke, where is a figure in classical dress which may be the duchess, or Religion personified, or Resigna-

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tion hanging over an urn, and above it a relief portrait of the duke. Each of these memorials is a work of distinction and well illustrates its time and prevailing style.

But these are not the objects of chief interest as you stand in the chapel. In the centre is a table tomb with statuary which are among the most remarkable examples of passionate, highly wrought sculpture to be found in Sussex or the southern counties. The work is earlier in date and manner than those just described; they are of the English renaissance. The memorial is principally—for others are commemorated—to Thomas Sackville, the son of Richard, Earl of Dorset. Gabriel Cibber (1630-1700), father of Colley Cibber, a poet laureate, was the carver. His work is not usually marked by distinction like this, it is usually commonplace, but in the work on the Dorset memorial Gabriel Cibber shows vision and insight. The figures are touched with living emotion and rare feeling. They are of father, mother and a dying boy, and the look of the parents, their dumb, poignant sorrow, is quite haunting. Other children in the panels below are shown in relief, and those dead at the time the work was executed are holding skull and palm leaves.

There is in Sussex another piece of sculpture to be compared with this. It is that in the north-east chapel of Ashburnham Parish Church. In that, William Ashburnham, who wears a curious combination of Roman dress and a periwig, puts



THE DORSET CHAPEL  
WITHYHAM



## A SHRINE OF ENGLISH SCULPTURE

out his hands as though to detain the passing spirit of his wife, and there too is a face of frozen grief. It is the work of Bushnell, the greatest sculptor of the Restoration age. If my readers wish to learn more of these two works, almost, of their kind, unique in England, I would commend them to Mrs. Esdaile's book which I have just mentioned.

Sussex churches are particularly rich in examples of memorial sculpture, both that of the Middle Ages, as those in Chichester Cathedral and the Fitzalan Chapel at Arundel, and of those which followed the break-up of the sixteenth century. There is a group of sandstone memorials, stone probably of the Bracklesham bed, at Selsey, West Wittering, Westhampnett and Wiston. They are of the same period and worked apparently by the same hand. In style and feeling they follow the old tradition. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries white marble from Italy came widely into fashion, displacing the softly veined alabaster from home quarries which hitherto had been dominant. Examples of these, some of high merit, can be seen at Cuckfield, the work of Bacon; West Grinstead, a tablet in the Cibber manner; Firle and Old Shoreham, both by artists unknown; the latter has sarcophagus of fine proportions with Greek details done by a sculptor who knew his job. Sompting has an example of Fisher of York, Wadhurst and Horsted Keynes by William Palmer, a little-known but capable craftsman of the early eighteenth century;

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Boxgrove, a finely worked tablet to the Countess of Derby, possibly done by Rysbrack. In Chichester Cathedral are memorials by Chantrey and Flaxman, some of the latter in his best 'wedgwood-ware' style.

East Lavant had an imposing memorial done by Bacon. It was so large and cumbersome that it blocked the chancel, and was buried at last by an irate incumbent beneath the chancel pavement, where it remains.

Here is a by-path of enquiry and interest for the intelligent Rambler. Our wayside churches in their monuments tell, beyond all else in the land, the story of forms of faith which have largely vanished and of an outlook on life and ways of thinking which now seem distant and strange.

## CHAPTER XXV

### A SUSSEX MYSTERY PLAY

It was the evening of Christmas Day in a year—let us say somewhere at the close of the fifteenth century—when the old church of Pevensey, much in appearance and general feature as it stands to-day, was crowded with village folk; and as the church then was pew-less, save for the special benches reserved for the Bailiff and Portreeve of the ancient port, it held a great many. It was filled not only by the people who lived in the High Street, and other streets now vanished, which ran down to the quayside, but also there were there those from many a lonely cottage on the wide marshlands.

The devotional services of the festival were over. There had been the parish mass at daybreak, with its processions round the aisles and the solemn pageantry of an ancient ritual, the congregations had sung at each service that oldest of all Christmas hymns, *Veni, veni, Emmanuel*, and now in the deepening gloom of a winter's day they were gathered, the whole parish in full strength, to see the 'Mystery Play of the Lord's Nativity'.

The old church lent itself admirably to this purpose. All was in darkness except just where



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nave and chancel met, and here stood two coronas of candles which, though they threw bright beams on the low staging set between them, yet left the rest of the nave and its aisles in twilight, while far down the deep chancel of the church hung the 'great light of St. Nicholas,' and at each side chapel the tapers burnt at the altars of Our Lady and St. John.

For weeks certain selected young men and maidens had been preparing and rehearsing their parts, and now the story set with simple scenes and movements was to be given.

But before the play the aged vicar, John Sayer, from his stall just beyond the chancel step and aided by a boy with a candle, led off with a short litany, and there came back in recurring refrain from the massed congregation, 'Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis'. Then was delivered in the Sussex vernacular the story of the Nativity. This was done by Miles Milward, clerk, sacristan and aquabajulus to the parish. The vicar had already in the solemn services of the morning read the accustomed Gospel, but this was said, as was required, in its Latin form; now he judged that, as this service was extra-liturgical and of a popular character, it should be read in a language the simplest could follow and appreciate. So he had rendered the sacred narrative into folk-speech, into homely Sussex, and Miles Milward, a functionary not slow to magnify himself, was appointed to read the vicar's translation. He did so in broad, tuneful South Saxon speech.

## A SUSSEX MYSTERY PLAY

### ACT I

‘Now how de Saver was born was like dis. . . . Joseph, he went up from Galilee, out of de town of Nazareth, into Judea, to de town of David, which be called Bedlam, for he was of de stock of David, to be registered wid Mary his tokened wife, who was heavy with child. And while dey was dere her full time was up and she childed her first, a boy, and swaddled him, and laid him in a manger; acos dere was no place for dem in de company part of de inn.

‘In de same country some shepherds were a-biding in de fills keeping watch over dere flocks by night. And a messenger of de Lord stood by hem, and de glory of de Lord shined round about dem; and dey was mortially afeãrd. And de Messenger said, “Doãnt be afeãrd, for, look’ee, I bring ’ee good tidings of joy to de full, which be for all people. For to you be born to-day in de town of David a Saver, which be de Lord’s Anointed. And dis be de token to you; you will find de baby wrapped in swaddling clothes laying in a manger”.

‘And all of a suddint, in drackly minute, dere was wid de Messenger dunnamany waits, a gurt lot, from heaven praising God and saying:

“Glory to God in de highest,  
And on earth peace among men who please Him”.

‘Den de messagers went back into heaven, and de shepherds said to each oder, “Let us goo

## A SAUNTERER IN SUSSEX

at once to Bedlam, to see de things 'bout which de Lord has let us know". So dey hurried off and found Mary and Joseph and dere was de baby laying in a manger. And when dey had seen it dey up and told what dey had heard about dis baby. And all who heard it wondered at de things made known by de shepherds. But Mary saved all these sayings and turned hem over agin and agin in her heart. And de shepherds went back to dere work, glorifying and praising God for all what dey had heard and seen jes as it was spoken to dem.'

A silence followed, and then, marking the commencement of the mystery, viol and pipe begin and there rises the tuneful voices of the chorister boys from the north chapel:

'Let us go to Bedlam  
And here see Mary,  
And Jesus Christ fast by  
All lappen in hay.'

All eyes are now turned on a solitary figure, a young female kneeling by the pillar of the chancel arch and bending over a book. If the light had been stronger it would have revealed the features of Peggy Burchett, the Bailiff's gentle daughter, carefully chosen for this rôle; but just now she seems like a distant figure of the distant tale she is rehearsing, and for a minute in deep silence her eyes are fixed on the holy book. Then, from the depths of the chancel a tall figure emerges radiant in tinsel. It is Gabriel, the messenger angel.

## A SUSSEX MYSTERY PLAY

'Hayl Mary gracyouse  
God's spouse, unto thee I lowte (eq. bend),  
Of all vyrgyns thou art qwene  
That ever was or shall be seyn  
Withouten dowte';

and in slow measured tones he delivers the annunciation: 'The power of the Highest shall overshadow thee,' and, as Mary turns with outstretched arms towards the dim altar, there rises first the soft voices of chorister boys, and then, like thunder in its volume and plain-song setting, the church's hymn of the Incarnation, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord'.

### ACT II

There is a deep hush throughout the church, as a silver-haired old man steps on the stage, with cloak, hood and staff. It is Joseph of Nazareth, and his part is one of tender pathos. He is full of grief and agony of heart. For long years, he says, under vow, he had prayed and toiled apart, seeking only to live near to God. Then he was told in a dream that he must, while keeping his vow, espouse a young maiden and protect her from the rough life of the world. He did so with misgivings. 'I irke full sore with my lyfe, that ever I wed so young a wife.' And now it would seem the worst had happened. There was coarse, cruel talk abroad, and it was said of Mary that she had gone the way of a weak woman. He is torn between two desires, to stay and shield her

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still, or 'to creep away to the wilderness, never to meet more, but to cherish a sweet memory'; 'for me she is clene as crystal, and shalbe whyle I lyfe'.

Once more the bright figure of Gabriel steps out and tells Joseph that he has the glory of a part and place in the world's most wonderful happening.

'Go way, Joseph, and mend thy thought  
I warn thee well, and wend thou nought  
To wilderness so wylde.'

'I loved her all along,' says Joseph pleadingly, 'I blamed her not, so God me save.' And he returns to a happy reconciling. 'Ah, Mary, wyfe, what cheer?' 'The better, sir, that you are here.' And this scene ends with words of praise. 'My wyfe and her sweet young wight, I'll keep to my life's end.'

### ACT III

After a carol, more like a lullaby in softness and sweetness, 'O pretty wight, O winter flower,' there came on a scene widely different in tone and atmosphere from those which had gone before. There is a loud noise, and from the Chapel of the Baptist there rushes in a group of shepherds, pushing each other about, rollicking with loud mirth and buffoonery. It is one of the singular features of Church life in the medieval period that side by side with a tender and intense devotion there could be tolerated within church walls a licence and freedom that seem to us

## A SUSSEX MYSTERY PLAY

grossly irreverent. The mirth and noise of the shepherds soon subside, and they gather round a fire, which is nothing more than a paper lantern, and fall into conversation. And here we listen to much the same grouching and grumbling common to-day. Masters are hard, the plough cannot move fast enough for them, the new upstarts are the worst of all of the 'gentlery men', 'the labourer had better hang himself than say them nay'. Shepherd Daw says that by the crown of Saint Nicholas he will work only as he is paid, and no more. They burst into a song, and then Matthew makes moan. It is about his domestic unhappiness. 'Mickle woe for wedded man, a silly wedded man; our hen both to and fro she cackles, and when she croaks the cock is in the shackles. Full hard and full ill in bower or in bed.' This amuses some of the audience, and there are ripples of laughter at the broad jests.

But just while Matthew is wishing himself in Heaven, where no bairns weep in the night, a sound is heard low and penetrating, and at once a deep hush settles through the church. It is the low fluting of a pipe from a far-away corner of the chancel, and after a few bars there rises the sweet treble of a chorister. 'Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy.' All the congregation is now kneeling, the frightened shepherds lie prostrate, and the clear voice sings the story of the humbling of God out of love for man, and then from the group of the 'boys of St. Nicholas', and taken up by the whole congregation, there

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risers the jubilant notes of the first of all Christmas carols, 'Glory to God in the highest'.

### ACT IV

The last scene is full of colour and movement. There are pushed on to the stage, while the 'Gloria' is being sung, the simple paraphernalia of the scene of the first Christmas morning at Bethlehem. Just a thatched pent, a manger box with hay, with the figure of the aged Joseph and the Mother with the Child. And hung from the edge of the pent roof is a red lantern, which throws a soft rosy light over the group. There is something of a mystic beauty in this scene, old and yet always new. It is the apotheosis of a little Child, and the radiant glory which belongs to motherhood, and all in the church knelt again, for each and every one was either mother or child of mother, and sang, 'Hail to Thee, blest Babe'.

Then again from the chapel the shepherds come in, this time slowly and shyly; and each as he knelt offered a gift. One 'a ball for thee to play with'; another 'a flackett and thereat hangs a sponne to eat thy potage withal'; 'Hail lytyll mylk-sop, here for thee is shepherd's bottle'; 'I bring thee a cap, a little red cap'. And to each Mary makes a gentle answer, but in the language it is of the fifteenth century, 'I thank thee for thy coming, and God give thee grace to make a good ending'.

So ends the Pevensey mystery play, a thing of

## A SUSSEX MYSTERY PLAY

its own; and it seems by turns uncouth, deeply reverent, noisy and unseemly in loud mirth, and then tender in its devotionism. We can never go back, and plays like these, when resurrected, have never the grace and simple charm as that of the age they belong to.

The story told above is quite imaginary. I have no knowledge of a mystery play enacted in Pevensey Church at the time mentioned or any other period. Yet I hope the reader will forgive me, for I have pictured what must have occurred over and over again in many churches of Sussex during the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. During those years miracle and mystery plays came into great vogue and were immensely popular among all classes. I chose Pevensey Church for this recital because I happen to know it well; I served the parish in happy pastoral work for many years, and I recall the long impressive chancel, the side chapels, the ambulatories of the nave, all which would particularly lend themselves to play and pageant. In the many other churches of the county of size and dignity it is highly probable that such settings forth of Bible stories and popular legends would be produced, sometimes by itinerating bands of players and more often by local effort.

There is no group of Sussex mystery plays known to us, those in vogue during the late medieval period were the 'Towneley' cycle and those of York, Coventry and Chester. These, which have much mutual borrowings and repeti-



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tions, may be said to have been in general use throughout England, though with touches interspersed of local colour.

The people of pre-Reformation years loved pageantry, movement and colour to an extent which may seem strange to us to-day. The enactment in mummary and spoken play of events solemn or amusing was an instinctive language. Puritanism and commercialism have between them effected great change in the old buoyant life of the common people.

I will not apologize for the rendering into old Sussex speech of the narrative of the Nativity. One of old, we are told, did not speak to the poor and uneducated as did the scribes and Pharisees, but in the soft Aramaic speech, 'a language understood of the people'. The Sussex dialect has all but died out, and, as far as I am aware, all we have of it in written literature are the 'Tom Cladpole' poems of Richard Lower. Would that more of its broad-vowelled and warm-coloured intonations existed on the printed page for future reference. I owe the short version of the Nativity which is given above to a rural worker, James Richards, now well into the evening of life, who knows the Bible through and through and for many years was a Methodist local preacher. I believe he did his preaching to Sussex folk in the language they best knew.





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